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American Statesmen

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American Statesmen

ALEXANDER HAMILTON

BY

HENRY CABOT LODGE



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EDITOR'S PREFACE

In the history of the United States, Washington and Lincoln stand apart in a monumental solitude. They belong in no class; no one seeks a place near them, or challenges even a possible comparison with them. It is only after we have established them in this grand and undisputed isolation that we try to put our other statesmen into ranks and classes according to our judgment of their capacity and their services. This attitude of these two men is a peculiarity in our annals distinguishing us from other peoples. No other nation has heroes filling quite the like relationship. The nearest approach to it is furnished by William of Orange. Neither Julius Cæsar nor Napoleon Bonaparte are parallel instances, though they overshadowed respectively all other Romans and Frenchmen; they were greater than others, yet they could be compared and measured with others. But this cannot be done with either Washington or Lincoln, because, apart from greatness, they are *different* from others.

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When we come to make out the list of our statesmen of the first rank, Alexander Hamilton would probably receive at least a plurality of votes for the highest place. In the minds of his countrymen, his memory has always been surrounded with a brilliant halo, has always had a prestige which may be regarded as in some respects surprising. For when readers come down to the actual records of his career, they find that they have to hear chiefly of financial schemes, the management of the treasury, arrangements concerning the national debt, revenues, tariffs, and internal taxation — dry matters, for the most part, and not often enticing popular interest. None the less it is the case that our historical writers have found a singular fascination about Hamilton; the amount of literature and the consequent research concerning him have been very great: yet there is not any symptom of satiety; our people still eagerly seize upon everything which is written as to his career, and seem unable to hear enough of the subject. Such a condition cannot be accounted for by the tradition of his personal beauty of countenance and charm of manner, which made him a leader of the leaders in public life, neither by the interesting tale of his tragic death. The explanation and the truth lie far deeper. Ham-

ilton's fame indicates the unformulated but full appreciation of the unquestionable historic fact that he was the real maker of the government of the United States. Washington created, or at least caused to be created, the national entity; Hamilton did actually create the political[1] entity.

By reason of these facts, the life of Hamilton was sure to be one of the most important volumes of this series; and, since so much careful writing had been already done concerning him, the selection of his biographer demanded more than ordinary consideration. No one in the country had at that time made a more thorough study of Federalism than Mr. Lodge had done. His ancestor, George Cabot, had been one of the chiefs of the Federalist party in its stronghold of New England, and had been the intimate friend of Hamilton; and the testimony of the intimacy still lives upon Mr. Lodge's library wall in the shape of Trumbull's portrait of Hamilton, a present to George Cabot as a near and dear friend. Knowing well that, if Mr. Lodge was very naturally inclined to make a hero of Hamilton, he at least practiced a strictly intelligent and reasonable worship, I

[1] I regret to be obliged to use this now degraded word, but I use it in its original and proper classic signification.

was greatly pleased to have him accept the task of writing the volume, which has fulfilled my expectations in every respect. It is a just as well as a sympathetic biography. Since writing it, Mr. Lodge has edited the new edition of Hamilton's works; and it is not supposable that any writer will hereafter have access to any important materials which he has not had and used.

JOHN T. MORSE, JR.

September, 1898.

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The vignette of "The Grange," Hamilton's home, is from a recent photograph. The house stands on what is known as the Harlem Heights, Tenth Ave. and 143d St., New York.

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ALEXANDER HAMILTON

CHAPTER I

BOYHOOD AND YOUTH

On the eleventh day of January in the year 1757, the wife of a Scotch merchant in the island of Nevis gave birth to a son, who received the name of Alexander Hamilton.[1] Many varying elements were mingled in this boy. He was a British subject born in the tropics, Scotch on his father's side and of French Huguenot descent on his mother's, and to this conjunction many of the qualities which Hamilton exhibited in after life may be traced. But that which strikes us most at the outset is his extraordinary precocity; his mind and character seemed to partake of the nature of those luxuriant tropical plants which in a few months attain a growth permitted only after years of conflict and care in the harsher climate of the North. Upon the childhood of Hamilton even the exhaustive and

[1] See Appendix, Note A.

devoted labors of his son and biographer, Mr. John C. Hamilton, fail to throw much light. His mother, who apparently possessed an unusual degree of wit and beauty, died early. His father was unsuccessful in business, and Alexander, the only surviving child, fell to the care of maternal relations, among whom he picked up a rude, odd, and desultory sort of education, and by whom he was placed in a counting-room before he was twelve years old.

There at his clerkly desk we catch the first clear glimpse of the future statesman in the well-known letter addressed to his friend Edward Stevens: "I contemn the groveling condition of a clerk, or the like," he says, "to which my fortune condemns me, and would willingly risk my life, though not my character, to exalt my station. I am confident, Ned, that my youth excludes me from any hopes of immediate preferment, nor do I desire it; but I mean to prepare the way for futurity." The expression savors of the grandiloquence of the last century, but the thought is natural and even sober, and is, moreover, that of a man, and yet it was uttered by a boy who had not passed his thirteenth birthday. At the same tender age he was left in charge of his employer's affairs, and some of his correspondence of that time has been preserved to us. These clear and sensible letters

of business have nothing in themselves unusual, but it is not a little remarkable that they should be the work of a lad whose contemporaries were studying the rudiments of grammar on school benches, while his capacity was great enough not only to write such letters but practically to manage on his own responsibility the affairs of a considerable merchant.

In the intervals of his office work Hamilton read and wrote much; Pope and Plutarch, we are told, were his favorite authors, and to his exercises in composition was due the publication of a vivid account of a severe hurricane which raged with devastating force in the West Indies. This literary effort attracted a good deal of attention, especially among those vague relatives to whom the boy's interests were intrusted, and by them it was decided that so much talent deserved wider opportunities than could be found in a West Indian counting-house. Funds were provided, and in his fifteenth year Hamilton bade a final adieu to his birthplace and took ship for Boston, where he arrived in October, 1772. Thence he proceeded to New York, and there, thanks to letters from the excellent Dr. Knox, a Presbyterian clergyman of Nevis, and one of the boy's earliest friends, he found wise and good counselors. By their advice he entered a grammar school of some note at Eliza-

bethtown, where he extended his acquaintance, and during the winter pursued his studies with the fiery and unresting energy so characteristic of him throughout his life. At odd moments he indulged in his propensity for writing. He produced not only prose but poetry, including hymns, elegies, and verses of all sorts, which were not without the merit inseparable from the work of an active, fresh, and fertile mind. At the end of the year he was ready for college. His first thought was for Princeton, but, as he characteristically proposed to go through the course as rapidly as he could without regard to classes, the rules of the college would not permit his admittance, and he entered King's College in New York, where he prosecuted his studies with the aid of a private tutor as fast as he wished. In the university as at school he threw himself heart and soul into his work, gathering up knowledge with quick apprehension, while the tireless activity of his mind continually sent his thoughts ranging into other and wider fields of finance, government, and politics. It was then his custom of an afternoon, as we are told, to walk under the shadow of the trees on Batteau Street, plunged in thought and talking eagerly to himself. The passers-by would turn to look at the small, slight youth, still a mere boy in appearance, dark of skin and with

deep-set eyes; and those who knew the "young West Indian," as he was called, already speculated about him vaguely, as people are wont to do about those who give or seem to give obvious promise of an illustrious future. But while Hamilton was leading the reflective life of a student, and meditating beneath the shadow of the trees, imbued perhaps with the "prophetic soul of the wide world, dreaming of things to come," a great revolution was swiftly coming to its crisis about him.

Successful men are those who take advantage of their opportunities, for opportunities are not made by men, but for them. Hamilton, we may be sure, would have taken full advantage of any and every opportunity, but he had the good fortune to have a great one opened to him. The question was which side in the gathering conflict he would espouse. It seemed perhaps more difficult to Hamilton to decide then than it does to us to decide for him now; and yet his choice was simple and his selection inevitable. He was singularly free in making his decision. He was born, it is true, in a little English dependency and had always been a provincial, but he had no family in New York to warp or incumber him; his ties of friendship were new and probably as much with one side as the other; and he was to all intents and purposes his own master. A

visit in the spring of 1774 to Boston, the hotbed of resistance to England and possessing an atmosphere very different from that of New York, where the Tories were in the ascendant, probably affected him not a little, and led him to a close examination of the all-absorbing controversy. He himself tells us that he had formed "strong prejudices on the ministerial side until he became convinced by the superior force of the arguments in favor of the colonial claims." This explanation is exceedingly characteristic and highly instructive. His masterful temper and innate love and respect for government, order, and strong rule dictated his prejudices. His clear, vigorous mind, and his profound belief in reasoning and argument, which so prevailed with him always, showed him plainly that the colonies were in the right. But after every allowance for the conviction brought by reason, an instinctive sense of what must be the true path for him to follow undoubtedly played a large part in Hamilton's decision. He was young, unknown, an adventurer in a strange land, and burning with a lofty ambition. The world was before him, and his fortune, which he meant should be a great one, was to be made. Constituted authority and a continuity of government offered at best but little to the most successful provincial. Change, revolution, and

war might bring almost anything in the way of military or civic glory. He chose rightly, and he also chose wisely, when he cast in his lot with the opponents of England.

New York was in possession of the Tories. The Assembly was ministerial, narrow-minded, and with a majority controlled by the home government. Upon this Assembly, in order to force New York into line with the other colonies now preparing for the first Congress, it was decided to bring what in these days would be called "pressure." With this purpose a great meeting in the fields was held on July 6, 1774, under the auspices of the patriot leaders. Hamilton was present listening to the orators. Like the boy Pitt under the gallery of the House of Commons, Hamilton was impressed by what was left unsaid far more than by all the rhetoric of the speakers. Filled with the belief that he could supply the omissions which he detected, he made his way to the platform and stood before the people. There were a few moments of youthful embarrassment and hesitation, while the crowd stared at the audacious boy, and then nature asserted itself and his words flowed unchecked. Hamilton was never eloquent in the sense in which Chatham or Mirabeau or Henry were eloquent, for he had not the imaginative and poetical temperament. But he had the elo-

quence of sound reason and clear logic, combined with great power and lucidity of expression, and backed by a strong and passionate nature. As he poured out with all his young fervor thoughts long pent up in his breast, we can well believe that the crowd, murmuring "It is a collegian! it is a collegian!" were deeply stirred by the oratory of one who spoke so well, although he was a stranger and in appearance a mere boy.

Once embarked, Hamilton was too honorable, too high-minded, and too thoroughly satisfied of the soundness of his convictions ever to waver or turn back, and tempting offers from the other side at a later day, when his value and his powers were better known, passed idly by him. He was not only firm of purpose, but, having taken his part, he pushed on in every direction open to him with his accustomed zeal. In those days public opinion was formed and the power of the press exerted through pamphlets, or by essays addressed to the printer, and published by him in his newspaper as communications. The ablest men of the country employed these channels to reach the public mind, and great importance was attached to such productions. Two tracts of considerable force assailing Congress and its measures, and written by two of the ablest writers on the Tory side, appeared in the autumn of 1774. The effect of these pam-

phlets was severe to the patriots, and while they were casting about for a champion Hamilton answered the attack. The Tories replied, and Hamilton rejoined in a second pamphlet of some seventy-eight pages. Both these tracts, which showed marked ability, were variously attributed to the most eminent leaders, and when their authorship was known the young writer gained a wide and immediate reputation. To argue points of constitutional law and of political justice and expediency was above all things congenial to Hamilton with his already well-stored mind, acute logic, and capacity for discussion. The pamphlets were excellent of their kind at a time when such performances were strictly judged, and, taken in connection with the youth of the author, deserved the great success which they obtained. They gave Hamilton an assured position, and led to the rejected offers from the Tories to which allusion has just been made.

The winter of 1775 passed away, New York was at last forced into the Congress, the battles came in Massachusetts, and revolution began. Meanwhile Hamilton continued his arguments against England in vigorous newspaper essays, took part in public meetings, and devoted his time to a study of military affairs, seeking also for practical experience by joining a volunteer corps commanded by Major Fleming. Besides

showing nerve in the performance of some trying military duties which were becoming very necessary in those troublous times, Hamilton appeared prominently on several occasions in efforts to repress, by argument and by fearless personal exposure, outbreaks of mob violence. The most memorable of these occasions was one which happened during the disturbances caused by the British ship of war Asia opening fire on the town. Persons and property had been injured, and there was wild commotion and an angry rising of the people in New York. The king's storehouse was pillaged, the Connecticut troops were sent for, and Liberty Boys rushed through the streets, threatening outrage and ruin to every Tory. Most prominent among the adherents of the Crown was Dr. Cooper, president of the college, and thither the angry mob hurried, bent on mischief of a desperate sort. When they arrived they found Hamilton and his friend Troup on the steps of the building ready to delay their entrance. The former at once stepped forward and began to reason vigorously with the crowd, and to denounce their disorderly conduct. While Hamilton was thus engaged, and while the populace halted to listen with amazement, no doubt, to the eager words of a youth whom they had last seen exposed to the fire of the Asia occupied with other

patriots in removing cannon, the excellent Dr. Cooper fled, after warning the people from a high window not to be guided by such a madman as his former pupil who was then addressing them.

The doctor's mistake was natural enough. He could not believe that Hamilton, patriot and rebel, was resisting the people and restraining their violence for the sake of an old Tory clergyman. There is, indeed, something rather surprising as well as quite fine in the spectacle thus presented of a boy, whose blood was hot with the new strong wine of revolution, risking his life and, what he loved probably much more, his influence and his popularity, in behalf of law, order, and mercy. In a similar fashion he interfered to save the life of one Thurman from what was then known as "Travis's mob;" and when the Connecticut horse broke into the town and carried off the types of Rivington, the Tory printer, Hamilton was filled with indignation at this violent suppression of opinion, and, if he could have got a few men to go with him, would have ridden after the marauders and recaptured the property. These instances of self-restraint and cool bravery are all remarkable in so young and so enthusiastic a man as Hamilton. In the midst of revolutionary excitement he did not hesitate to come forward to check his own party,

to oppose and censure their excesses, to take the side of the unpopular minority in behalf of mercy, justice, order, free speech, and a free press. But whether he succeeded or failed in these attempts they were creditable alike to his sense and courage; they show strongly his early and deep detestation of anything like disorder, and above all his hatred of that most noxious of all forms of confusion, a riotous city rabble.

But the time for preparation was closing fast. Early in 1776 the New York convention ordered a company of artillery to be raised. Hamilton applied for the command, and his examination quickly dispelled the doubts of his fitness in those who suspected mere youthful presumption. He recruited his company rapidly, and spent upon its equipment his second and last remittance from home. He had now burned his ships behind him. Youth, study, and the days of dreaming and meditation were gone. He was a man striving for everything that an ambitious man can desire. He had already entered upon the stage of life at an age when most boys were still in school or college, and a very exciting and bustling drama he found in progress. He had youth, health, great talent, a strong will, courage, ambition, and his sword. With these weapons his fortune was to be made.

CHAPTER II

THE REVOLUTION

The artillery company quickly showed the talent of its commander. Hamilton devoted himself to it as he did to everything he undertook, and by unceasing drill soon made its evolutions conspicuous in an army where discipline was novel and models were rare. The young captain, by the excellence of his troop, attracted the attention of Greene, who fell into conversation with him, was impressed by his ability, and introduced him to Washington, thus putting him at this early day in the line of advancement. The kindness of the Rhode Island general was never forgotten by Hamilton, who became one of Greene's strongest supporters and warmest admirers, at a later day declaring him to have been the first soldier of the Revolution. Hamilton, however, was soon tested by a severer experience than any which drill or parade could offer. He won his spurs at the disastrous battle of Long Island, where with great coolness and courage he brought up the rear in the masterly retreat which saved the army, and gave the first

conspicuous proof of that daring and sagacious genius for which Washington was as eminent in good as in evil fortune. With the rest of the army Hamilton took part in the retreat up the Hudson, distinguished himself by the admirable manner in which he served his battery at White Plains, and offered to recover by storm Fort Washington, — a piece of reckless daring to which Washington refused his consent. From New York Hamilton went with the army in their terrible march through New Jersey, and shared in the brilliant campaign of Trenton and Princeton. By this time, after six months of hard fighting, his company was reduced to twenty-five men, who retained their old discipline, but little else. Their commander had, however, made a name as a dashing and gallant officer, and this, added to his literary reputation, led to his appointment as one of Washington's aides with the rank of lieutenant-colonel, on March 1, 1777, when he was barely twenty years old.

Hamilton acted wisely in accepting this new position, for which he was peculiarly fitted. He seems to have regarded the step with some misgiving, and to have felt that he had made a considerable sacrifice. His self-confidence, natural enough under the circumstances, was then as always too strong; but in this instance he controlled it. Extraordinary success and the

consciousness of great talents made it easy for a very young man to believe that if he remained in the line nothing was beyond his reach, and that no prospect was too brilliant for reasonable hope. Yet it is more than probable that if he had continued a line officer he would have attained no higher rank than that which he ultimately reached, while he would have sacrificed experiences and connections of inestimable value. With all his precocity and undoubted aptitude for military affairs, he was still too young to have obtained the highest commands before the end of the war, whereas, as a member of Washington's family, he was brought into close association with the greatest man of the age, whose friendship he was able to win and retain. As a member of the staff of the commander-in-chief, Hamilton's duties were various and highly responsible. He did not have the independent command for which he sighed, but he was present at all the battles in which the army was engaged, took more or less part in them, and always gained honor and distinction. His principal occupation was in the conduct of Washington's immense correspondence. A large proportion of the endless letters, reports, and proclamations which issued from headquarters was the work of Hamilton. In regard to these documents there has been a very needless discussion. To claim

for Hamilton the merit of all the correspondence which bears Washington's name, but which is in the handwriting of his aide-de-camp, and to speak of it as if Hamilton was the man who directed the movements of armies and informed Congress of their duty, is absurd. Washington was fortunate in having on his staff one of the most brilliant men of the day, with a vigorous, original, and well-stored mind, fertile in thought, a lucid and acute reasoner, and a master of a clear and forcible style. We may be sure that nothing passed through Hamilton's hands without being put in the strongest and most condensed form, and at the same time amplified and adorned; but we may be equally sure that, however much the general profited by the suggestions of his able secretary, the central ideas and guiding principles, whether conveyed in a word or dictated at length, were the intellectual property of the man who signed those letters and reports with the name of George Washington. The kernel of a letter may lie in a simple negative or affirmative, which when fully expressed will cover pages, but the author of the letter is he who directs the decisive "yes" or "no," and not the man who clothes the thought in fitting words. This in no sense implies detraction. It is a wrong to any man, be he great or small, to attribute to him something to which he is not

entitled, and to present Hamilton, even in the most indirect way, as the author of Washington's dispatches, is merely to injure the former and neither to hurt nor help the latter. Hamilton's work as military secretary — and there is a great mass of it extant — deserves all praise, and greatly redounds to his credit. As his enthusiastic comrade, the gallant Laurens, said, he certainly held the pen of Junius in the American army, and to that gifted pen, employed as freely in another's service as in his own, and to the versatile and original mind of its possessor, Washington owed much and gave every proof that he appreciated the debt. For those interested in a close study of Hamilton's mind and character, the dispatches which he wrote as secretary, as well as those which he composed in his individual capacity, are of great value. In them we can trace the rapid development of a keen and powerful intellect. There we can see displayed sagacity, foresight, acuteness, and force in every affair to which they relate, whether military or civil. There, too, we perceive the fertility of resource, the vigorous self-confidence, unhesitating decision and undaunted spirit, which the young aide afterwards made conspicuous on broader fields. All these qualities — and they form a goodly list — were moreover in a state of vigorous growth. There is nothing in Hamil-

ton to suggest his namesake who bore the famous sobriquet of "single speech," who was content with one splendid effort and then silent forever. Hamilton's correspondence, on the contrary, during his service on Washington's staff, constantly improves. In this and in many other ways he shows that reserved force which is one of the most essential elements of greatness, and the capacity to gather increased strength, like Antæus, from each fresh contact with the earth of every-day events in a time of strain and trial.

The most important duty which fell to Hamilton while serving as an aide was his mission to Gates to seek reinforcements. At that moment additional troops were essential to Washington, and they were only to be obtained from the northern army. While Washington was bearing defeat, and fighting on with grim pertinacity, Gates, in command of an army formed from the hardy levies of the North, had achieved a signal victory which has taken a place among the fifteen decisive battles of the world's history. The surrender of Burgoyne had made Gates — to whom as little was due for the victory as could well be the case with the commanding officer — the idol of the North, and of New England especially. To offend Gates personally was a small matter, but to offend the northern colonies, just then dissatisfied with

Washington, would have been a very serious affair. As the superior officer of Gates, Washington had the right to command, and at the same time this was precisely what he wished to avoid. Hamilton was, therefore, to get the troops without using, except in the last resort, the imperative authority which he carried in his pocket. It was a delicate and difficult mission. Hamilton was never conspicuous for the patient and tolerant qualities which make a great diplomat, least of all in the days of impetuous youth, and yet, thanks to his strong sense and clear perception of facts, he acquitted himself most admirably. Gates, naturally a weak man, was blinded by the glamour of his great victory. When the wishes of the commander-in-chief were made known to him he held back, hesitated, and finally gave way. Hamilton got his troops by the exercise of much patient persistence, and kept the tempting letter of command out of sight. On his way back he also pushed forward the delaying Putnam, treating that general much more cavalierly than Gates, but only, it is to be feared, as the unmanageable temper of the old wolf-killer deserved. Hamilton won much credit, as well as the approbation of Washington, for his excellent behavior on this occasion. Not long afterward he was sent to Newport on a similar

mission to the French, and again he showed himself a good envoy, although he failed to bring our allies to accede to Washington's wishes.

One other episode of Hamilton's career as an aide-de-camp deserves notice in any account of his life. His position brought him into close connection with the wretched attempt to betray West Point. It fell to him to see and strive to console Mrs. Arnold in the first agony of her distress after the flight of her traitor husband, and it was his lot also to be much with the gifted and ill-fated André. In letters to Miss Schuyler, his future wife, he depicted the scene with Mrs. Arnold; he described the whole unhappy affair, and dwelt much upon André and upon his expiation of another's crime in which he had been but a tool. In all this there was deep pathos, and it acquires a fresh interest for the student of Hamilton's character as it shows the deep feeling and tenderness of his nature. No account of Arnold's treason and of the actors in it has ever equaled Hamilton's letters, which in their clear and forcible sentences are full of a subdued eloquence, touching us and appealing to us even now by the emotion of a strong and reserved nature.

Such, in brief, were the salient events in Hamilton's experience of four years as a member of Washington's staff. But not the least



John André

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striking incident of this period of his life was that which resulted in the sudden close of his service with the commander-in-chief. We have Hamilton's own account of the affair, written on February 18, 1781, two days after it happened. Washington had sent for Hamilton to come to him. The latter, delaying a few minutes in obeying, found the general at the head of the stairs, who reproved him with no undue sharpness, saying that to keep him waiting was a mark of disrespect. Whereupon Hamilton replied, "I am not conscious of it, sir; but since you have thought it, we part." One can hardly read this youthful ebullition even now without a smile. The fashion has prevailed of treating this quarrel as if the two participants stood upon equal ground, and this puts the whole matter on a thoroughly false footing. Let us look at the pair a moment as they stand there at the head of the stairs in the New Windsor house. One is a boy in years, although of unusual and manly maturity of mind. He is a stranger in the land who has shown himself possessed of great and promising talents; he has proved himself an able writer, a brave soldier, an excellent secretary. This small, slight, dark-eyed stripling is facing George Washington, and brimming over with a sense of offended dignity. Washington stands there in the prime of his

middle age, large and imposing in personal appearance. He is one of the foremost men in the world, a great general and statesman, grave and impressive as becomes a man who has carried in his hands the life of a nation. Some of Hamilton's biographers have referred to this affair as one of Washington's outbursts of passion. Like all great men Washington had strong passions, like very few great men he had them under almost complete control. When they did break forth, as happened now and then in great stress of feeling, they bent everything before them, and there was a hush among those who listened. If Washington had spoken to Hamilton as he did to Lear about St. Clair's defeat, that fine reply, one is inclined to think, would not have been uttered. But deep waters are ruffled, not stirred, by a passing breeze. Washington spoke to Hamilton in a tone of sharp but proper reproof. Few generals, probably, would have spoken so courteously and gently to a young aide, who had kept them waiting, and thus sinned against the first of military virtues, prompt obedience. The event in itself is trivial enough. We smile at Hamilton's dignity, and at his youthful satisfaction with his own conduct; but Washington's behavior, then and subsequently, is not without importance. He not only endeavored at once to heal

the breach, although Hamilton repelled his advances, but he continued to interest himself in his former aide, and suffered their friendship to undergo no diminution. There was more in this than the magnanimity, absolutely without flaw, which Washington always showed. It was a tribute to Hamilton's abilities from one of the best judges of men who ever lived. He saw Hamilton's capacity; he cared nothing for his little outburst; and he was determined to retain his hold upon one in whom he perceived the possibility of great service to the country at some future time. He did this, too, without advancing Hamilton over the heads of other men to the position which the latter felt he would have gained if he had not joined the staff.[1] Washington watched over his fortunes at Yorktown, where Hamilton had a command and obtained the perilous privilege of leading the assault upon one of the outworks of the enemy. The opportunity was not lost. At the head of his men Hamilton rushed with all his fiery impetuosity upon the British redoubt, carried all before him and took the position in ten minutes, doing his work much more quickly than the French, to whom the other redoubt had been assigned. With this dashing exploit Hamilton's military career came to an end, and

[1] See Appendix, Note B.

he soon after betook himself to the pursuits of civil life.

I have touched upon these incidents of Hamilton's army life because they throw a strong light upon his subsequent career, enable us to understand his course in aftertimes, and furnish the key to certain qualities which explain his thought and action. But there are other phases of mind and character suggested and exhibited by this eventful war period. Between his leaving the quiet college and the storm of the Yorktown redoubt, he was brought into close contact with many persons, and it thus becomes possible to study his capacity of dealing with other men, a matter of the first importance for any success in active life, and especially for a public man. In his position in the army there was no opportunity for so young a man to win general popularity, but this was something which Hamilton never attained, and indeed never sought. His genius and achievements were not of the kind which appeal to the hearts and imagination of the people; he was too great a man ever to descend to the arts of a demagogue, and he was too definite a man ever to have that vague popularity which hangs about some persons without any assignable reason. But, at the same time, Hamilton had an extraordinary power of making friends, and this comes out strongly in his army



The Surrender at Yorktown



life. It was not merely that he won the respect of men of character and ability; any man of equal talents was sure to do that; but he gained the affectionate devotion of men of that sort, and attached them to him. He was evidently very attractive, and must have possessed a great charm of manners, address, and conversation. But the real secret was that he loved his friends, and so they loved him. We see this on every side. All his comrades on the staff, and all the officers, young and old, who knew him and were not hostile to Washington, loved him, and were proud of his talents. The same was true of the young French officers, with whom he was much thrown on account of his perfect command of their language, a very rare accomplishment in the colonies. From Lafayette down they all liked Hamilton, and spoke to him and about him with all the quick enthusiasm and lively affection of their race. In all this we see the germs of the power which afterwards gave Hamilton a personal following, much smaller than that of many of our party leaders, but in proportion to its numbers unequaled in our history for character, ability, and devotion combined.

Another question which grows out of this period is that of Hamilton's military ability. Whatever he did in the war of the Revolution was well done, but a large part of his service

was rather political and diplomatic than military, and he was too young to have the largest opportunities. He proved himself a soldier of courage, dash, and coolness; he showed that he had both nerve and foresight, all very essential qualities, but he had no chance to show more than this. He certainly believed that he had in him the making of a great general, and his military temperament and aptitude for military affairs go far to confirm this belief. If he had had the opportunity, it may be safely said that he would have been a distinguished general, but whether he would have been a great one must necessarily remain a matter of mere conjecture.

Yet, whatever his talents for war may have been, the ruling passion was that of a statesman, and even in the midst of the hardships of the camp and field nothing could repress Hamilton's strong natural bent. Neither physical discomfort nor visions of military glory could keep him from meditating on questions of government and finance. At the beginning of 1780, being then just twenty-three years old, he addressed an anonymous letter to Robert Morris on the financial affairs of the Confederacy, at that time in their worst state, and threatening far more than the British armies to bring the Revolution to an untimely end. The paper begins with a careful consideration of the condition of the

nearly worthless currency and the causes of its depreciation. It all looks very simple as we read it now, but at that time political economy was unknown, the modern systems of financiering were unheard of, and the true causes of financial phenomena were still hidden. Away from such books and authorities as there were, and relying on his memory for his facts, Hamilton gives an analysis and explanation of the depreciation of the currency admirable in its clearness and soundness, thoroughly modern in reasoning, and conclusive in argument. Young as he was, he allowed with singular penetration for the part which the imagination plays in all such matters as credit and currency, and reckoned on it as a factor with great exactness. This little essay on inflated and depreciated currency is as valuable to-day as when it was written a century ago, and proves beyond question an inborn genius for finance, showing its author indeed to be entitled to stand with Turgot and Pitt as a pioneer in what has since become the most important department of practical government. This remarkable essay was only preliminary. The youthful aide-de-camp had his remedy outlined in his head and ready for execution. He proposed to meet existing difficulties by gradual contraction, a tax in kind, and a foreign loan, which last was to form the basis of a national

bank. The great purpose of the bank, and indeed the pith of Hamilton's scheme, was to unite the interests of the moneyed classes in the support of the government credit. The bank was to be a great trading and banking corporation in private hands, but backed and partly controlled by the government, to which it was to be under certain obligations. The details were carefully worked out, but the leading ideas suffice to show the grasp of Hamilton's mind and the germs of his future policy.

A few months later Hamilton addressed a letter to James Duane, then a member of Congress from New York, on the subject of the government. A large part of this document is devoted to the army, then in sorry plight, owing to the inefficiency of Congress and the ill-adjusted relations of the States. The root of the evil Hamilton finds in the weakness of the central government and the jarring and independent powers of the States. He urges stronger government, single men at the heads of departments, and the absolute control by Congress of certain functions, such as making treaties, controlling the army and navy, and the like. To bring these things to pass, he says that Congress must either resume the discretionary powers which it exercised at the outset and then suffered to decline, or else a convention must be

called to form a new, strong, and well-defined central government. Neither scheme was possible at that time, and the second, which was soon of course to be the true remedy, was at that moment of war and confusion more impracticable even than the first. The letter concludes with an outline of the bank as the best method of dealing with the most crying evils. The whole paper is strongly centralizing in tone, especially for that time, although Hamilton had not then got beyond thinking that senates were liable to become dangerously aristocratic.

A month later he writes a brief letter to the New York patriot, Isaac Sears, in which he sums up the results of his reflections as follows: —

"We must have a government with more power. We must have a tax in kind. We must have a foreign loan. We must have a bank on the true principles of a bank. We must have an administration distinct from Congress, and in the hands of single men under their orders. We must above all things have an army for the war, and an establishment that will interest the officers in the service."

Six months afterwards, in the spring of 1781, to Robert Morris, then at the head of the finances, he writes again, setting forth his scheme for a national bank with all the additions and improvements obtained by a year's reflection.

These letters are all interesting, not merely because they display Hamilton's talents in the strongest way, and show the breadth and scope of his mind, but because they exhibit in the clearest light the constructive character of his intellect. He was not only thinking like everybody else how the war could be brought to a successful conclusion, and present difficulties conquered, but also how a new system could be built up on the ruins of the old fabric of society and government. His time had not come; the world about him was occupied, as it always is, with the immediate exigency; it had not even finished the work of destruction, and was very far from having cleared the ground and made up its mind to build again. Hamilton's ideas, as those of far-seeing and brilliant men are apt to be, were a little before their time. But people were coming nearer to them every day, and in a few years just such a man would be needed. The beginning was indeed close at hand, for Hamilton went from the army almost at once to a stage where he had opportunity for his first experiments, and could learn in a hard school the immense task which lay before him of converting his theories into practice and turning his schemes into realities.

CHAPTER III

LAW AND POLITICS

In the midst of the war Hamilton had found time to fall in love. On his mission to Gates he met at Albany Miss Elizabeth Schuyler. The acquaintance thus begun was renewed in the following spring, and then ripened into an engagement. Late in the same year, on December 14, 1780, he was married. This was in every way a most fortunate event for Hamilton. He not only won a most charming and intelligent woman for his wife, but he allied himself with a family rich, well known, and of the best position in the community. His father-in-law, General Schuyler, a brave, generous, honest gentleman, was universally beloved and respected, and thus Hamilton secured the firm anchorage which his wandering fortunes needed. He was no longer an isolated stranger, as much at home in one state or city as in another, but a member of a strong family deeply rooted in their ancestral soil. On the other hand, Hamilton brought to this respectable and important Dutch family not only the society of an attractive man, but the

rising fortunes of one whose brilliant talents had, as everybody could divine, a great destiny. Certain it is, that he was most warmly received by his wife's family, and the wide connection thus formed by marriage was soon held by the much stronger tie of personal friendship.

But whatever else Hamilton brought his wife, worldly goods were not among his possessions. Love of money was never one of his qualities, and he had an abiding confidence in his own capacity to earn at any time as much as he needed, so that at the close of the war he found himself with a wife and child and no resources except his arrears of pay and his own abilities. He steadfastly refused General Schuyler's generous offers of assistance, and betook himself at once to a study of the law, the profession by which he intended to get both fame and bread and butter. At the conclusion of a few months' study, early in the summer of 1782, he was admitted to the bar. His preparation was hasty, and his knowledge, when he came to the bar, must have been exceedingly imperfect, but with his intensity of application and readiness of mind he had undoubtedly gathered in that short time a good deal of legal learning; and, what was far more to the purpose, it was not an undigested mass of information, but was thoroughly systematized and arranged. Everything that

Hamilton had in his mind, everything, certainly, to which he gave his attention, took the shape of argumentative statement. All his serious ideas fell naturally into the forms of logic, and with a little effort he could throw his thoughts on any subject into numbered paragraphs, and make them assume the guise of a concise brief. In a word, Hamilton had, above all things, a classifying and logical mind. His hasty legal studies came, of course, within the operation of this rule of mental action. As fast as he acquired his knowledge of law, it fell into well-defined form and system, so that when he was admitted to the bar all he had learned was compactly stated and neatly arranged in a little manual, which was found in manuscript by those who came after him, and which, as we are told, did good service to others whose minds did not have a clarifying effect upon everything that was poured into them.

But while Hamilton was studying law, and even before he left the army, others, conscious of his talents and feeling that he deserved well of his country, had pressed him forward for public office. He could have been a commissioner of the French loan, but, always generous, he gave way in order that his friend Laurens might go to Europe and rejoin his father, fresh from imprisonment in the Tower. His name was

brought forward and talked about in connection with the peace commission; and finally, in June, 1782, Robert Morris, who appreciated Hamilton's abilities, appointed him continental receiver of taxes for New York. Vested with his new authority, Hamilton betook himself to Poughkeepsie, where the legislature was sitting, and where his restless spirit soon became apparent. First came a set of resolutions demanding a new convention and a better union of the States. This the legislature was induced to pass. Next followed a clear and scientific plan of taxation to replace the impotent and chaotic system then existing, but this the legislature would not adopt. Then appeared an address to the public creditors, letters to the governor, pertinacious applications to all branches of the government and all members of it, and vigorous efforts to obtain for the central government the tardy and sorely needed supplies. The results of all this zealous work were pitiful. Hamilton squeezed out a few thousand pounds, and with these, and his resolutions in favor of a new convention of the States, he was fain to be content. His activity bore fruit, however, in another direction. The acquaintance he made and the impression he produced resulted in his election by the legislature as a member of Congress, in which once brilliant but now feeble body he took his seat in

November, 1782, having resigned his receivership a month before.

When Hamilton entered Congress, it had fallen far below that predecessor of 1774–75 which extorted the applause of Europe, and which probably had a higher average of ability than any legislative body of equal numbers of which anything is known. It had not, however, in 1782, reached that condition of utter decrepitude into which it subsequently sank, nor did it, as yet, enjoy the full measure of that popular contempt which subsequently became its portion. It still had among its members men of ability and force. Conspicuous among them was Madison, young, but prudent, sagacious and acute, warped somewhat by his Virginia notions, yet, withal, a statesman of a high order, and second in talent to Hamilton alone. There were a few others, such as Wilson, Clymer, Bland, Higginson, and Witherspoon, men of reputation, sense, and ability, who stand out from the crowd; but most of the members, although well-meaning, were wholly commonplace, and totally unable to deal with the grave problems which confronted them. The difficulties of the situation were, in truth, immense. It was a time of social and political chaos, of broken promises and unfulfilled hopes. The storms of war had at least filled the sails, but they had now ceased to blow,

and the ship of state was lurching terribly in the heavy sea, and threatening at every moment to go to pieces. Hamilton had entered upon a broader field, but he found the same disheartening obstacles which he had encountered in New York increased in Congress thirteen fold, and to be overcome by a legislature which was utterly powerless. Young, enthusiastic, and full of ideas, he flung himself manfully into the struggle. He made himself deeply felt at once, produced such an impression that he was talked of as fitted for several of the most important offices, and left the stamp of his clear and powerful intellect on everything Congress attempted to do. But it was all in vain. His most desperate efforts were fruitless; for, bad as things were, the condition of the times was such that they could not get better until they had become much worse. Let us glance for a moment at the various tasks to which he put his hand, as they come before us inextricably interwoven in this year of his public service. They will serve to show the persistent energy and strong sense of the man, and the evil days on which he fell at the opening of his career of political action.

Just as Hamilton was entering Congress Franklin was engaged in the diplomatic campaign which ended in such a signal triumph for the American envoys. When the issue of

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the negotiations became known in this country, there were plenty of men ready to abuse the astute old philosopher and his colleagues for violating their instructions in proceeding without the coöperation of France, and for agreeing to a secret Florida article with the British commissioners. The natural hatred of England had been balanced by a trust in France equally natural, but far more unreasonable. On this principle Congress, with what amounted to positive servility, and guided by the subtle Luzerne, had placed the negotiation within French control, and this was the command which the commissioners had boldly and wisely disobeyed. Hence the outcry from lovers of France and haters of England. Hamilton, with his keen insight and with the liberality of mind which assured him that the envoys could judge better than he, was less extreme. Yet even he, although soon to be stigmatized as "British," felt so favorably toward France, and so hostile to England, that he advocated a middle course, and introduced a resolution which, while it sustained and praised the envoys, provided, nevertheless, for the disclosure of the secret article to the French minister. The signatures to the preliminaries of the general peace cut the controversy short, but even at their worst our foreign relations were simplicity itself compared to our domestic difficulties.

Finance was the overwhelming trouble which laid bare the fatal vices of our political system, and it was upon financial rocks that the rickety Confederation was dashing itself to pieces. Our affairs in the way of debts and taxation were entering upon their last and worst phases at the beginning of 1783, when the patriotic Morris was resigning in disgust, and the young projector of national banks was new in Congress. These were of course questions highly attractive to Hamilton's genius, and therefore it was that upon them his most strenuous efforts were wasted while representing his State at Philadelphia. The first object was to obtain consent to the grant of an impost on imports. One State had not been heard from, but Rhode Island was the only one in active opposition, and to the conversion of this obstinate and selfish little community Hamilton addressed himself. He it was who led the debate in Congress, who obtained a committee to visit Rhode Island and argue with their government, and from his pen proceeded a forcible letter to the governor. Even while he was contending with Rhode Island, Virginia receded from the agreement and the whole scheme fell through. Had it succeeded, it would, if the States had held to it, have furnished a permanent revenue, and hence Hamilton's zeal. Defeated at this point, Congress

fell back on its old policy of recommending a grant for a term of years, and against this Hamilton and Higginson voted with the Rhode Islanders, who opposed all forms of taxation or debt-paying. Hamilton explained his course in a letter to Governor Clinton. He was not willing to lend his support to schemes of proved futility, or aid in the self-stultification of Congress, which progressed rapidly enough in any event. The fact was that there were very few adherents of what Hamilton calls "Continental politics," which favored strong, honest measures and the funding of the public debt. To this the friends of the States made all possible opposition, and the result was helpless stagnation. The government had no resources, for the only one of any value, foreign loans, was nearly exhausted. Hamilton looked with absolute disgust upon this dogged refusal to pay the price of freedom, this stupid indifference to honor rapidly degraded by the practical disregard of all just claims, foreign and domestic.

But the blackest ingratitude, and the dishonesty which touched Hamilton most nearly, was the treatment of the army, for Congress contemplated disbanding these gallant soldiers without even the pretense of providing for their long arrears of pay. Washington regarded with horror such an idea, and feared "most unhappy

disturbances." Hamilton had a notion that the army might be used to threaten Congress sufficiently to induce them to make proper provision for all creditors; but Washington warned him that the army suspected that it was to be used for this purpose, merely to be thrown aside afterwards, and that it was a dangerous instrument to play with. Very soon this prediction of possible disaster from men with arms in their hands, and smarting with a sense of wrong, came alarmingly near fulfillment, and failed only through the influence of Washington himself. The army at Newburgh was in a perilous condition, and the famous Newburgh addresses show what might have happened if Washington had chosen to put himself at the head of the ill-used troops. But Washington not merely refrained from uttering the fatal word of ambition; he threw himself into the breach, checked the whole movement, and quelled so far as was possible the rising and dangerous discontent. We hardly appreciate that at Newburgh Washington rendered one of his greatest services. He did not put aside the crown, like the Cæsar of Shakespeare, but the idea of sovereignty never even entered his thoughts, never for an instant darkened the unrivaled purity of his utter unselfishness and single-mindedness. A word from him, and the star of the

Revolution might easily have gone down in military rebellion and military despotism coming suddenly upon an exhausted and divided country. But all this Washington checked, and the only outcome of the discontents was a mutiny of some new levies near Philadelphia. Even these mutineers, however, frightened the feeble government, and produced a sharp controversy with the Pennsylvanian authorities, because they failed to call out the militia for the protection of Congress, who thereupon employed Hamilton's vigorous pen to castigate the lukewarm State. In all these troubles Hamilton manfully took the part of the army, and acted with the commander-in-chief. He drew resolutions of thanks to Washington, which Congress readily adopted, for they were always generous of fine words and empty phrases, but the army got nothing. They were sent unpaid to their homes, taking their arms with them as tokens of the gratitude of their country. Hamilton urged the maintenance of a force which should furnish the basis for future armies if they were needed, but Congress cut it down to the lowest point, retaining only some eighty dangerous mercenaries in the national service. Defeated at all points, Hamilton strove to have the debates made public and the sessions open, hoping in this way to exert the pressure of pub-

lic opinion, but he was once more flouted and voted down.

In the summer of 1783 Hamilton's term expired, and he withdrew to private life and to the practice of his profession. His congressional service had been a complete failure, so far as results were concerned. Even his iron energy of purpose had dashed itself in vain against the popular demoralization and indifference. The times were not yet ripe for the work he had to do. But, although he failed to accomplish anything for the good of the country, he extended his own reputation, and laid fast hold of a position which was sure to make him a leader in the future party of reconstruction. A letter from McHenry, written in October, 1783, gives in clumsy phrase a very exact idea of the effect produced by Hamilton in Congress. McHenry says: —

"The homilies you delivered in Congress are still recollected with pleasure. The impressions they made are in favor of your integrity; and no one but believes you a man of honor and republican principles. Were you ten years older and twenty thousand pounds richer, there is no doubt but that you might obtain the suffrages of Congress for the highest office in their gift. You are supposed to possess various knowledge, useful, substantial, and ornamental. Your very grave, and your cautious, your men who measure

others by the standard of their own creeping politics, think you sometimes intemperate but seldom visionary, and that, were you to pursue your object with as much cold perseverance as you do with ardor and argument, you would become irresistible. In a word, if you could submit to spend a whole life in dissecting a fly, you would be, in their opinion, one of the greatest men in the world. Bold designs; measures calculated for their rapid execution; a wisdom that would convince from its own weight; a project that would surprise the people into greater happiness without giving them an opportunity to view it and reject it; are not adapted to a council composed of discordant elements, or a people who have thirteen heads, each of which pays superstitious adorations to inferior divinities."

Besides reputation, Hamilton gained experience in Congress, and that of a kind which had a powerful influence on his opinions of politics and government. His mind was naturally conservative and order-loving, but he was also young and enthusiastic, and in the struggle with England he held very liberal views, was not only then as always a champion of constitutional liberty, but, in the days when he thought senates dangerously aristocratic, leaned strongly to democratic principles. These tendencies, developed by a war against oppression, were rudely nipped, first by the treatment of the gallant army of which he was a member, and

still more by his experience in Congress. The natural impulses of his temperament once more asserted themselves in all their strength. In Congress, or rather in the States which were there represented, he saw thirteen pure representative democracies, some of an extreme type. The distinguishing qualities of these communities, and of the central government as well, were at that moment faction, jealousy, and discord, infirmity of purpose, feebleness in action, unblushing dishonesty in finance, black ingratitude toward the army, and the rapid acquisition of an ever-growing contempt on the part of the rest of mankind. The main difficulty lay clearly in the overgrown rights of thirteen independent and jarring States. Next to this came the inevitable disorganization and demoralization consequent upon revolution, which Hamilton saw plainly enough, but which he believed to be deeply aggravated by too great an extension of democratic principles. We can hardly wonder that, constituted as he was, his conservatism grew vigorously. From this period we may date the conception of that aristocratic republic and strong government, which was to be so highly centralized that the obnoxious States of the confederacy would sink to mere provinces, and which found expression in the plan so eloquently presented by Hamilton to the conven-

tion of 1787. By the Congress of 1782–83 were planted, also, we may be sure, the germs of that deep distrust of democracy and democratic systems which attained so great a growth when it seemed to find in the French Revolution such awful confirmation. The one year of Congress, utterly futile and barren as it seemed, had a deep effect upon Hamilton; that is, upon a man who was destined to leave a profound impression upon the history of his country, and who was to become the leader and type of a powerful school of political thought.

Hamilton's withdrawal from public office was by no means equivalent to separation from public affairs. Both as a lawyer in successful practice, and as a writer, he was a leader and mover of opinion in New York. One of the great troubles of the times was the popular attitude toward the Tories, or loyalists, and in New York the feeling was peculiarly bitter. There was an active determination to take vengeance on all who had sided with the crown and were now helpless, and this was done in utter violation not only of wise policy, of public morals, and of the law of nations, but also in direct contravention of the treaty with England. Hamilton before leaving Congress had urged upon Governor Clinton the imperative duty of paying British debts, as provided by the treaty, and on

his return to the bar he found himself at once engaged in a case growing out of these hostile feelings. The legislature had passed an act, known as the "Trespass Act," giving a right of action to those whose property had been occupied during the war by loyalists. Relying on this statute, a poor widow brought suit against a rich loyalist merchant who had occupied her property during the British ascendency. All the sympathy and passion of the multitude were with the plaintiff, but Hamilton, with the fine disdain of popular clamor which always characterized him, took the brief for the defendant. In a masterly argument, elaborate, eloquent, and high-minded, he appealed to the pride of the court to do justice, regardless of everything else; he reviewed every point of his opponent's case; raised the question from the narrow ground of a wrongful statute and rested it on public morals, the laws of nations, and the sanctity of treaties. He gained his cause, the first and one of the greatest of the forensic triumphs which gave him so high a place at the American bar, and his victory was the signal for a burst of legislative anger. The decision and the judges were denounced, but Hamilton had stemmed the tide, for the time at least, and, what was of far greater importance, had led the court to vindicate its honor and sense of justice.

Other violent and revengeful acts against the loyalists followed, and the disregard of treaty rights gave England a readily-taken excuse for refusing to carry out her share of the provisions for indemnity and for the surrender of the posts. Again Hamilton came forward in behalf of a wise, liberal, and true policy of amnesty and conciliation. Snatching time from his professional labors, he sent forth two vigorous and widely read pamphlets advocating all that was just and statesmanlike in dealings with the loyalists and in observance of treaties. He remained unrefuted. Certain ones among his enemies planned to challenge him successively until he should fall in a duel, but though they were ready to face his pistol they could neither meet nor answer his arguments. They had the good sense to abandon this murderous scheme, and no challenge was sent, but the idea was a very pretty compliment to Hamilton's power as a writer.

In other directions Hamilton's ability and activity were equally manifest. He was one of the founders and principal originators of a state bank, which was of good service, and cut off the land bank scheme of Chancellor Livingston, just then fascinating the very untrustworthy lawgivers of the State. In the formation of the Society of the Cincinnati he took an active

part, and was one of its best friends and guides in the tumult of attack with which it was received in that day of narrow views and ungrateful suspicion. Thus these years slipped away in busy usefulness, but Hamilton never lost sight of the necessary changes in the national system, watching, waiting, and striving, in company with the few leaders like Washington who thought "continentally," to create a proper public opinion and bring about a successful national movement.

CHAPTER IV

THE CONSTITUTION

1786–1789

WHILE Hamilton was thus engaged in the pursuit of his profession, taking an active part in many matters of general importance, and laboring with a chosen few for the education of the people in the right direction, and for the establishment of a national party, public affairs were rapidly going from bad to worse. The people, who had won the admiration of Europe in their conduct of the opposition to England and in the war for independence, had now become an object of general contempt, and were very nearly at the lowest stage of degradation in the eyes of the world. Divided among themselves, with no army, no navy, no cohesion, floundering willfully and helplessly in a sea of unpaid debts and broken promises, the States of the confederacy were bankrupt in money and reputation alike. The great powers looked on with gratification, each seeing a possible victim in America, and coveting a share of the spoils.

England, beaten in battle, and determined on revenge if not redress, held the western posts, kept the Indians in her control, and the borders in a state of terror and ferment, while by hostile proclamations and discriminating laws she sought to ruin the commerce of her former colonies and embroil them still further with each other. To France the Revolution had offered a splendid opportunity to gratify the passionate longing for revenge engendered by the terrible disasters inflicted by Pitt. The ministry and the court of Louis XVI. watched American affairs closely, and when the moment of assured victory seemed to have come, they gave us welcome aid. They intended to strike a terrible blow at England, and they did it. The fine gentlemen and gallant soldiers who came here, came for vengeance. If we except Lafayette, nearly every one in France, from the king and his ministers down, were animated by policy and revenge. The sentimental sympathy of fashionable Paris would have done but little for us. Self-interest did a great deal. Having helped us most essentially, and having at the same time used us for her own purposes, France now aimed covertly to obtain control of her former allies, and even Spain insulted and defied us. The disintegration of the general government was spreading to the individual States. The future State of Kentucky

was breaking off from Virginia; Wyoming was a sharp thorn in the side of Pennsylvania; New York, at odds with Massachusetts, was still more deeply embroiled with the settlers of what was to be Vermont, and with New Hampshire. As the States in their selfishness and blindness trampled on the confederacy, they began to feel the effects of this conduct in these disorders within their own limits. The finances of every State, with hardly an exception, were utterly debauched. Fresh inflations of worthless currency were coupled with barbarous laws to enforce its circulation and compel its acceptance. Public bankruptcy was followed by personal and private distress, and then came stay-laws, and every sort of dishonest expedient in the so-called interest of the debtor class. In every State, too, were local leaders, like George Clinton and John Hancock, who saw in a strong central government a great diminution of their own consequence. They preferred being first in their villages to being second at Rome, and therefore headed, directed, and gave force to the ungovernable majority, and gained political prosperity from the evils of the time. The first sobering shock came from Massachusetts. In that State, one of the richest and strongest in the confederacy, the Shays rebellion broke out, threatening courts and law with extinction. Hancock, the

popular hero, had prudently resigned, and James Bowdoin, a man who thought "continentally," was left to crush the insurrection, and sacrifice his popularity in the service of the State. The whole affair was soon over, but it had its effect. The miserable fabric of the central government had tumbled at the stroke, and armed anarchy and rebellion looked terribly unpleasant when men were brought face to face with them. They did more to arouse the people to a sense of their desperate condition than all the brilliant reasoning of Hamilton or the great influence of Washington.

From Massachusetts, too, under the lead of Bowdoin, came the first effort for a better union in the form of instructions to her representatives to urge the necessity of a new convention upon Congress. But the representatives were chosen by the states-rights party, for in truth there was at that time no other, and they smothered the instructions, explaining their course at their leisure a twelvemonth later. The first attempt had failed, but had done its share of the work of drawing public attention to the true remedy and its necessity. The successful movement came from the commercial interests. Virginia and many other States were striving for a retaliatory agreement against England, but nothing could be effected. New York was particularly

selfish, and the neighboring States were beginning to open free ports and discriminate against New York and against each other. These warring and increasing jealousies were, of course, destroying our commerce and crippling the country. Virginia, having made a commercial convention with Maryland, was struck with the idea that it would be a good plan to extend it to the other States, and in a burst of liberal feeling passed resolutions in January, 1786, calling for a convention at Annapolis to consider the establishment of a uniform commercial system.

It is at this point that Hamilton's share in the formation of the Constitution begins. In this limited and unpromising opening he saw a chance to bring about a convention with powers great enough to reorganize the government throughout and save the sinking fortunes of the country. It was but a stepping-stone, and a small and slippery one at best, but, if properly used, the next stride might be to a gathering capable of extended and enduring work. With this great end in view, some of his friends and followers secured seats in the legislature; and while the Clintonians were magnifying their State and their leader and helping to plunge the wretched confederacy still deeper in the slough of impotency, the little band of Continentalists "went their whole strength" on representation at An-

napolis, and succeeded in obtaining the appointment of five commissioners, of whom Hamilton was one. After the fashion of that feeble and demoralized time, only two commissioners, Hamilton and Benson, went to Annapolis, where they met the representatives of no more than four other States, such was the public indifference to anything of national importance. The little meeting could do nothing for commerce or anything else, but it was able to issue an address calling another convention where the delegates should come with general powers, such as New Jersey had given in the present instance. This address was drafted by Hamilton, and after it had been toned down to suit the sensibilities of Virginia and of Edmund Randolph, governor thereof, it was sent out to the people. In simple and forcible terms it set forth the condition of the country, the evils and dangers which threatened it, and the grave need of a complete reorganization of the government. The little gathering at Annapolis had done its work, and played its part as a stepping-stone. It now remained to make the convention which was to come a success.

With this end in view, Hamilton gained an election to the legislature of New York, and at once assumed the lead of the forces opposed to the governor. He served on many important

committees, and took an influential part in all the business of the House. The dividing question was the grant of a permanent revenue to Congress. Here Hamilton had already been at work and had written and distributed an address to the people, denouncing the refusal of New York to comply with the request of Congress. The preceding legislature had granted the revenue, but under conditions which nullified the act. Congress had asked for an extra session to reconsider this action, and Clinton had refused. In January, 1787, the new legislature was obliged to meet the question. All reason and a great deal of ability besides Hamilton's were with the general government, but Clinton had the votes. After a hot debate, the governor obtained an approval of his course, and after a still more protracted struggle, in which Hamilton shone with the full lustre of eloquent argument, the grant of the impost was defeated. Clinton and his followers gave the finishing stroke to the confederacy, completed its wreck, and left the country to choose between anarchy and union on a new basis. They builded better than they knew.

But while Hamilton, with practical good sense, was straining every nerve to sustain Congress and give the existing system, wretched as it was, another chance for life, he did not lose sight of

the grand object which he had kept in view for years, and which had brought him to the New York legislature. In the course of the session his talents had been fully displayed, his personal attraction had been deeply felt, so that despite the hostile majority he carried through a resolution for the appointment of five delegates to the coming convention. The Senate cut down the number to three, and defeated a second resolution, which Hamilton carried in the House, to add two more. The election of delegates followed, and resulted in the choice of Chief Justice Yates, John Lansing, Jr., and Alexander Hamilton. Yates and Lansing were uncompromising Clintonians and states-rights men, who could be relied upon to vote against any form of improved federal government. The fact of their election is the best evidence of the odds which Hamilton had overcome in securing the resolution for their appointment. Notwithstanding the character of the delegates, Hamilton had won a decided victory in the very teeth of a compact majority by forcing New York to be represented in the convention.

On the 25th of May, 1787, the representatives of nine States were assembled at Philadelphia, and the work of forming a new Constitution began. It is no part of my purpose to enter into the history of that famous convention.

Hamilton's great services to the cause of the Union and the Constitution were rendered before and after its meeting. From the day when he wrote from Washington's camp the letter to Duane setting forth the scheme of a stronger government, he had never ceased to labor for that end. In every legislative body within his reach he had striven for resolutions commending that object. He it was who had seized with quick sagacity on the opening afforded at Annapolis and turned it to such good account. He had labored incessantly to form public opinion by essays in the newspapers, by addresses and speeches, while in private letters he kept up constant communication with those leaders who thought as he did, and sought always to make converts where his words or his friendship could have weight. By great sacrifice of time and by strenuous exertions he had forced New York to appear at the convention, and had toiled to gain the approbation of Congress for the new enterprise. At last his thought and labor were near fruition. The convention which he had urged had met, he was himself a member, and yet he still stood alone, master only of his own personal influence. In the decision of the momentous questions he was helpless, for the vote of New York was in the hands of his enemies and sure to be cast against him on

every occasion. To have contested every position with his colleagues, and at every trial to have voted against his State, would only have impaired his standing and injured his cause. He therefore prudently refrained from the useless and unequal conflict, took comparatively little part in the debates on details of the Constitution, and was absent a large part of the time from the convention. In conversation with the members he could persuade and counsel, and this he did; but he wisely decided to concentrate all his force in debate in one speech. For this purpose he selected at the beginning of the convention, after the various plans had been submitted, the general theme of a new government. Completely master of his subject, filled with a deep conviction of the solemnity of the occasion, he delivered a speech occupying five or six hours, described by Gouverneur Morris as the ablest and most impressive he ever heard, and embodying all the accumulated reflections of years. The brief remains to us, and in that bare outline can be readily traced the range and variety of the speech. He spoke of the gravity of the occasion, of the choice possible to the convention; he reviewed the whole science and theory of government, and, with an overflowing abundance of illustration, surveyed the entire domain of historic precedents; he showed our

low condition, the evils of the existing system, and the resulting principles on which a new government should be founded. Delivered with all Hamilton's impressive energy, glowing with the ardor of the speaker, and expressed in language at once forcible and transparently clear, we may well believe that this speech had a profound effect.

In the course of his argument he read his own plan for the new government, carefully worked out and perfected. This plan, which discloses the essence of his opinions on government, followed in a general way the English system, as did all others presented, including the one finally adopted. In after times Hamilton was severely reproached with having said that the British government was the "best model in existence." In 1787 this was a mere truism. However much the men of that day differed, they were all agreed in despising and distrusting *a priori* constitutions and ideally perfect governments, fresh from the brains of visionary enthusiasts, such as sprang up rankly in the soil of the French Revolution. The convention of 1787 was composed of very able public men of the English-speaking race. They took the system of free government with which they had been familiar, improved it, adapted it to the circumstances with which they had to deal, and put it into

successful operation. Hamilton's plan, then, like the others, was on the British model, and it did not differ essentially in details from that finally adopted. But it embodied two ideas which were its cardinal features, and which went to the very heart of the whole matter. The republic of Hamilton was to be an aristocratic as distinguished from a democratic republic, and the power of the separate States was to be effectually crippled. The first object was attained by committing the choice of the President and senators, who were to hold office during good behavior, to a class of the community qualified to vote by the possession of a certain amount of real property. The second was secured by giving to the President of the United States the appointment of the governors of the various States, who were to have a veto on all state legislation. These provisions, as may be seen at a glance, involved the essential character of the government, and although purely republican, came much nearer to the British model than any other by their recognition of classes and of the political rights of property, while by the treatment of the States a highly centralized national government was to supersede entirely the confederate form. In the Congress of the Confederation, Hamilton had seen that all the difficulties arose from the too great power of

the States, and further, as he believed, from the democratic form of their governments. With his usual bold decision, therefore, he struck at the root of the evils and struck hard. Many of the states-rights men in the convention dreaded too much democracy, when applied to the people of the United States collectively, but they were far from approving the vigorous ideas of Hamilton. The majority of the members undoubtedly favored a democratic system in the Union, such as they were familiar with in their own States. Even those who believed with Hamilton, that in the best government there should be an infusion of aristocracy, had no disposition to risk what was then deemed the last chance for a respectable union, on a scheme which would be hopeless of acceptance. There can be no doubt that Hamilton, with his keen perception of existing facts, was perfectly aware that the leading principles of his plan stood no chance of adoption, either by the people or the convention. The aim of his great speech and of his draft of a constitution was to brace the minds of his fellow members and to stimulate them to taking higher ground than the majority of their constituents demanded. In this he succeeded. His eloquent reasoning, if it did not lead men to his own conclusions, at least raised their tone, enlightened many members, and brought them

to a more advanced ground than they were at first prepared to take. This was all of great importance, and to work for such results was, in Hamilton's isolated position, his wisest course.

His message once delivered, he waited and watched, aiding quietly and effectively whenever he could, but not attempting to thrust himself forward, fettered as he was by the action of his own State. His colleagues, however, abandoned the convention, and at the close Hamilton, not shrinking from the responsibility of representing alone a State where opinions adverse to his own prevailed, once more took part in the debates and affixed his name and that of New York to the Constitution. When the end was thus finally reached, he sprang once more to the front and gave free rein to all his activity and zeal. It was in this last decisive struggle, in securing the acceptance of the work of the convention, that Hamilton rendered his greatest services to the cause of the Constitution, — services more important and more effective than those of any other one man at this last stage of what was in truth a great political revolution.

I have said that Hamilton had no expectation of the adoption of his own plan of government by the convention, but he none the less thoroughly believed in it. He thought it bet-

ter and more enduring than the one actually adopted, and he never lost faith in its principles. Indeed, as the distrust of democracy disclosed in his plan by the proposition for an Executive and Senate to be chosen by a qualified suffrage grew and strengthened in the conflicts arising from the French Revolution, Hamilton's confidence in his own theory deepened, and his faith in the existing Constitution declined. But when the work was complete at Philadelphia, when he had put his name to the compromise which he had anticipated, and in which he rejoiced, he gave his loyal adherence to the new Constitution and the new system. Had he been an agitator, or a sentimentalist of muddy morals and high purposes, a visionary and an idealist, he would have stood up and howled against this Constitution, which was not what he wanted, and which fell so far short of his own standard. As he was none of these things, but a patriotic man of clear and practical mind, he knew that the first rule of successful and beneficial statesmanship was not to sulk because one cannot have just what one wants, but to take the best thing obtainable, and sustain it to the uttermost. In the Constitution, however imperfect he might think it, he saw a vast improvement and unlimited possibilities, and for the adoption and successful working of

the Constitution he prepared to labor with all his strength.

In the country at large, and in most of the States, there was a majority against the Constitution, but there it was before them, and the people had to make their choice between that and anarchy. They did not see the alternative quite so plainly as we do now, but that they felt it is shown by the fact that, while a large majority longed to say "No," a very narrow majority in eleven States did say "Yes." The choice thus forced upon the people by the submission of the Constitution did away almost everywhere with the miserable indifference which had become the prevailing sentiment in regard to all things national. Parties began to spring up, the press teemed with controversial essays and letters; and more emphatic marks of interest, in the shape of rioting and burning in effigy, were not wanting.

New York was not the most important of the States, either in wealth or population. In these respects she was surpassed by Virginia, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania, and her adhesion to the new scheme was considered much less vital than theirs. But in geographical position, capable as she was of dividing New England from the Middle and Southern States, New York had great importance, and almost made

up in this way what she lacked in wealth and population. Her assent to the new scheme thus became of great moment, and it was very difficult to gain. In New York party feeling had always run higher than elsewhere, and it was now extremely bitter. The opposition there to the new Constitution was stronger, more compact, and better led, and had a more active, powerful, and unscrupulous chief, than in any other State. In the city of New York a society was formed to resist the adoption of the Constitution by the state convention; and there, very soon after its signature, a concerted attempt was made in the Clintonian interest to write down the new scheme in a series of connected and well-planned essays. This was a gage of battle which Hamilton was ready enough to take up. He asked nothing better than to debate the question before the tribunal of public opinion. The challenge was promptly accepted, and the reply came in the form of a letter signed "Publius," written in the cabin of a little vessel as Hamilton was gliding quietly down the tranquil current of the Hudson River. The work thus begun extended over many weeks, a new number appearing, as a rule, every three days. In the midst of the most pressing avocations, both public and professional, Hamilton always found a moment in which to turn his

ready pen to the vindication of the Constitution, so that the series might never be interrupted. In this great work he was much assisted by Madison and slightly by Jay, both of whom brought ability, training, and sound sense to the task. There has been some controversy as to the proportionate share of these eminent men in this undertaking, but the discussion is of little moment. The original conception was Hamilton's, he wrote considerably more than half the numbers, and to posterity "Publius" will always be Hamilton. This remarkable series of essays, famous as "The Federalist," is still the best exposition of the Constitution apart from judicial interpretation. "The Federalist," throughout the length and breadth of the United States, did more than anything else that was either written or spoken to secure the adoption of the new scheme; but it was something more far-reaching than a timely and practical piece of argument. The countless pamphlets, essays, disquisitions, and letters which saw the light at the same time have disappeared. They have been consigned to the dust-heaps of history, and the waters of oblivion have rolled over them. But "The Federalist" still stands. No one will deny that it is dry, and that it is not calculated to amuse an idle hour, but the "Oceana," the "Leviathan," the "Fragment on

Government," are not easy reading, and yet they are intellectual possessions highly prized and not to be parted with. As an exposition of the meaning and purposes of the Constitution, "The Federalist" is now and always will be cited on the bench and at the bar by American commentators, and by all writers on constitutional law. As a treatise on the principles of federal government it still stands at the head, and has been turned to as an authority by the leading minds of Germany intent on the formation of the Germanic empire. In a word, "The Federalist" marks an epoch in the development of free constitutional government, in the art of confederation, and in political thought. On these essays Hamilton's fame as a writer has always rested and must always rest, although many of his other political papers are of equal ability and force.

The immediate results of "The Federalist" were so important that its literary merits have been somewhat overlooked. These essays have, in fact, become so firmly imbedded in our political history that their place in our literature has been forgotten. The development of colonial literature was rudely arrested by the troubles with England and by the conflict of the Revolution, when the intellectual force of the community was wholly absorbed by politics and

war. After the peace, constitutional and political questions, and the struggle for material prosperity, engaged exclusively the mental energies of the people. The result was that we had absolutely no literature except the literature of politics. This presented, of course, a very restricted field, and literature of this sort, that is, literature with an object and as a means to an end instead of one cultivated purely for its own sake, can never be of the highest order. In this single branch, however, the standard was very high. The genius of the people in this direction was strong and keen, and their faculties had been sharpened still further by the long controversy with the mother country, in which the talent displayed by the arguments of the colonists upon constitutional points and the ability of the American state papers had extorted the admiration of the leading minds of England. It may be safely said that in dealing with questions of politics and government the people of the United States were second to no other nation. When a man entered the arena of political discussion he not only encountered vigorous opponents and competitors, but he appealed to a public whose judgment on these particular subjects was highly trained. In this literature the essays of "The Federalist" take the first place. They exhibit a wide range of information; their reasoning is

strong; their style is simple, forcible, and clear; they were admirably adapted to their purpose; and above all they have endured, for they were a fresh and original contribution to human knowledge and to the best thought of the time. The conception of "The Federalist," and the lion's share of the essays, belong to Hamilton, and entitle him to the first place in the literature of the day. This is especially true if we take "The Federalist" in connection with his other writings in various forms and at different times, but always upon kindred topics. Hamilton has won in this way an important position in the literary history of America. It may be fairly said that his work takes the first rank in the only literature of the time. When it is remembered that he was also a busy lawyer, an active politician, and a great statesman, this is high praise, even if the literature in which he was foremost was nothing more than the literature of politics.

By the publication of "The Federalist" Hamilton rendered his first preëminent service to the adoption of the Constitution; his second was by securing the adhesion of New York. Clinton had failed to prevent the call of a state convention by the legislature, where the Federalists prevailed after a sharp struggle; but now that the last decisive conflict was upon him, he gathered all his forces and prepared for battle.

He triumphed without serious trouble in the election of delegates, and found himself master of forty-six out of sixty-five votes when the convention, which chose him to be their president, assembled. The Clintonian majority was led by Melancton Smith, a keen debater and a man of ability, and by Yates and Lansing, Hamilton's colleagues at Philadelphia. The slender minority of nineteen was headed by Hamilton, ably supported by Jay and Livingston. "Two thirds of the convention and four sevenths of the people are against us," wrote Hamilton, as he surveyed the unpleasing prospect, anxious and grave, but full of courage. The outlook was in truth disheartening; but we may well imagine that Hamilton felt instinctively the coming victory, that he rejoiced like the strong man to run the race, hopeless as it seemed, and that he prized the laurels to be won all the more on account of the odds which confronted him and the hard fight which must be fought. The first issue was on postponement. The Clintonians urged delay, in order to see the experiment tried, to be guided by the other States, to examine further the scheme, and so on with all the excuses of procrastination. Their ground was shrewdly chosen, but the Federalists met the issue boldly, and when it came to a vote, even the devoted partisans of the governor shrank from settling

the momentous question by evasion, and postponement was defeated. Then the work of the Philadelphia convention was taken up, sharply debated, and minutely scrutinized in every clause and paragraph. Day after day Hamilton was on his feet upholding the cause of the Constitution. Every opinion which he had expressed was turned and twisted into a weapon of personal attack, and he was constantly assailed as if he and the Constitution were one. Defending and explaining his own position without weakening his cause, he debated every point and met his vigorous opponents in constant battle. No detail was too small to be dealt with, no flight was too distant for him to take. Filled with his subject, thoroughly familiar with all that could be said on both sides, he reasoned and pleaded, exhausting every resource of argument. When the Constitution had been thus reviewed, it could be seen how his work had told. The opposing forces faced each other for some days in complete inaction. The Clintonians, despite their majority, dreaded to come to a direct vote, uncertain as to the precise effect of Hamilton's arguments. The Federalists, who had been fighting for time and knew that time was working with them, were in no haste to move. Nine States had ratified. The experiment would surely be tried, and presently came the news

that Virginia had assented. The old policy of evasion was once more attempted by moving an adjournment, and was again defeated. Then came a long string of amendments and a proposal for conditional ratification. Hamilton met this in a brilliant speech, and Melancton Smith confessed that conditional ratification was absurd. The end was near. A short interval elapsed, and then Melancton Smith admitted that he had been convinced by Hamilton, and that he should vote for the Constitution. This was the signal for a break, and when the vote was taken the Constitution had a majority of three in its favor. Bearing with him these joyful tidings, Hamilton hastened to take his seat in Congress, to which he had been elected some months before despite a vindictive opposition on the part of the governor.

This New York convention was an epoch in Hamilton's life. It so chanced that in the years which remained to him he had no opportunity after this to take part in a great debate. His eloquence found vent repeatedly, of course, at the bar and in public meetings, but never again in convention or in Congress. Thus it happens that his legislative career closed when he was barely thirty, and yet he had attained the very first rank as a parliamentary orator. This fact is as rare as it is remarkable, for high position

of this sort is usually the crown of a life spent in legislative debate. Hamilton's case is an almost solitary instance of a man's achieving this difficult reputation while the work which was to stamp him as one of the great legislators and statesmen of his country still lay before him. This sounds like mere panegyric, but a little consideration shows that it is only the simple truth. Hamilton's victory in securing New York came at a time when the land was filled with debate and discussion; when besides the national convention at Philadelphia there were twelve state conventions, and when all the talent of the nation was called into conspicuous action. That under such circumstances one state convention should be obscured is hardly to be wondered at, and thus the magnitude of Hamilton's success simply as an achievement of parliamentary skill and eloquence has been lost sight of. In New York the difficulties were greater than elsewhere. The hardest struggles in other States were in the two great commonwealths of Massachusetts and Virginia. In the former, however, all the ability of the State was banded together to sustain the Constitution; by skillful tactics, Samuel Adams and John Hancock, the great leaders of the states-rights party, were disarmed and partially converted, so that those who confronted the Federalists in actual

conflict were very inferior men. In Virginia the ability was pretty equally divided between the contending parties, but the opposition was much less stubborn and unreasonable than in New York or Massachusetts, while the Federalists had the inestimable advantage of Washington's enormous personal influence. In New York, if we exclude Hamilton, the preponderance of ability was with the governor, who in political strength and management was a host in himself. The majority against the Constitution was very large, carefully disciplined and counted, compact, and ably led. This majority Hamilton overcame by open debate. He changed votes by his untiring succession of brilliant speeches, and when party lines are drawn there is nothing so rare as such a feat in all the long records of parliamentary contests. He did this, too, in the midst of continued personal attacks, which he was compelled not only to ward off, but to keep distinct from his cause. It is true that circumstances worked with him, but this was part of his campaign; and that the pressure caused by the accession of other States was not necessarily decisive is shown by the postponement of the question in North Carolina and the refusal to call a convention in Rhode Island. Any one familiar with legislative bodies and with parliamentary history can appreciate the

meaning and weight of the confession wrung from the leader of the majority, when he admitted that he had been convinced by Hamilton on a question which had agitated the public mind for months, and on which party feeling had run high. Tried by the severest test, that of winning votes, Hamilton's victory is of the highest rank in the annals of modern oratory.

That the new States were almost painfully deficient in nearly everything which gave refinement to the Old World civilization — in art, in literature, in philosophy, in social splendor — cannot be doubted; but in politics, constitutions of government, and public law they were more advanced than any other people; and in capacity and skill in parliamentary debate and political controversy they were as well versed and as keen as their brethren of the House of Commons. In this field, therefore, Hamilton can be measured by standards as high as any then in existence, and can be compared with any of his contemporaries on either side of the water. His many speeches have perished, for there were no shorthand reporters; he spoke extemporaneously from the stores of an overflowing mind, and only meagre outlines of arguments and striking sentences condensed to the last point remain. Yet it is not difficult to analyze the qualities which made Hamilton a great orator.

Concerning the intrinsic merit of what he said, there is no need to go farther than the essays of "The Federalist" to learn that they were profound expositions of the principles of constitutional law and of the state of public affairs. In the same essays, or in any other of Hamilton's pamphlets or reports, we can also find that he set forth his ideas with wonderful clearness, directness, and force, often with intense compression, at times with a great variety of illustration. All these attributes avail much to clear men's minds of error and to convince them of truth. But behind the lucid reasoning and the nervous expression there must have been something more, — some qualities which moved men's hearts. Inconceivable as it seems with such topics, we yet know from eye-witnesses that Hamilton moved his hearers to tears. What was it that could do this? To stir an indiscriminate crowd to tempests of grief or rage is not an uncommon power; to move to deep emotion a legislative body, in this instance, of course, largely hostile and made up of picked men, is an extraordinary feat. From Hamilton's letters and essays, — indeed, from everything he ever wrote, — we know that he was not a man of strong or fertile imagination. He would never have pictured a coalition by describing the junction of the Rhone and Saone

with a felicity of expression which was startling in its vivid exactness, or held his hearers breathless as he drew the fanciful retrospect of the aged Bathurst. In a period when tropes, metaphors, and images were fashionable, Hamilton dealt but little in them. With him, thoughts and sentences are alike simple, strong, and straightforward, and these he used effectively and convincingly, not by delighting the imagination and beguiling the fancy, but by communicating through his words, voice, and manner his own spirit. That he had pathos, sympathy, and depth of feeling can be seen in the André letters, and these qualities did him good service; but that which led him to victory was the passionate energy of his nature, his absorption in his work, his contagious and persuasive enthusiasm. He rises before us from the past small in stature, but erect and graceful, and by the art of the chisel and the brush we can see the firm, strong jaw, noble head, long, straight nose, and, most effective of all, the dark, deep-set eyes. We can easily imagine how he looked, with his eyes glowing and flashing as he became excited, and how his full, melodious voice rang out, compelling the attention of all who listened.

Hamilton's speeches in the New York convention do not live on the lips of schoolboys.

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They suffered from having been spoken in a small state convention at a time when eleven other similar assemblies were held. They had none of the splendor which came to Pitt and Burke from their forum; none of the glitter of the gorgeous pageant which gathered in Westminster Hall to listen to the wrongs of the Begums; none of the national lustre which encircled Ames when he shook Congress with dread at the prospect of war with England, or Clay when he denounced the Essex junto, or Webster when he upheld the cause of the Union. Yet if we try Hamilton's speeches by the severest tests, by the conversion he wrought, by the sustained power, the readiness, fertility, and resource he displayed, and above all by results, this series of speeches in the New York convention deserves to rank with the highest triumphs of modern parliamentary oratory. Such at least was the opinion of his contemporaries, both friends and foes. In the grand procession by which the Federalists of New York celebrated their victory, the federal frigate was named the "Hamilton," while the opponents of the Constitution assailed him for using such consummate art in oratory that he blinded, hoodwinked, and misled his hearers, preventing their voting in accordance with their real convictions, so bewitched were they by the magic of his words.

No greater compliment could have been paid him; and when his bitterest enemies ranked his eloquence so highly, posterity may fitly adjudge its place to be among the first.

The great battle had been fought and won, but much remained to be done. The demands of New York and Virginia for a new convention to amend the Constitution must be evaded, and officers of the new government who were sound Federalists must be chosen. Hamilton carried through Congress the ordinance fixing the dates and the place for putting the new government in operation, and then turned his attention to New York. His reward was defeat for reëlection for the unexpired term of the old Congress. Clinton, though beaten, held his men together in an extraordinary way, and with an unyielding grasp. The Federalists controlled the Senate, but Clinton had the House when the New York legislature assembled. The result was an obstinate dead-lock, and New York was unrepresented in the first electoral colleges, and had no senators when the new Congress met. The state elections soon followed, and Hamilton flung himself heart and soul into the campaign. Yates was nominated by the Federalists, as a moderate man able to draw votes from the other side, and Hamilton supported him eagerly and eloquently with voice

and pen in the newspapers and on the platform. This choice of a candidate was due to Hamilton, and it may well be doubted whether he would not have done better if he had nominated some steady Federalist. He would certainly have strengthened his party, but he was probably led to select Yates by the desire to win at all hazards. His hatred of Clinton probably blinded his judgment, which, whenever it went astray, was warped by the energy of his personal feelings. At all events, the doughty governor prevailed once more, despite the exertions of his enemies, but his power was broken. His majority was a very narrow one, and the legislature was in favor of the Constitution. This gave the senators to the Federalists, and by most desperate efforts they succeeded in choosing four of the six representatives in Congress.

The election of the senators was marked by one of those errors into which Hamilton was led on one or two memorable occasions by his imperious will and headstrong disposition. Up to this time the Livingstons, one of the ruling families in New York, had acted with and given powerful aid to the friends of the Constitution. They cheerfully conceded one senatorship to Schuyler, but they and others like Morgan Lewis desired the other, as it is said, for some New York man of their faction, and they were

especially opposed to King, whom Hamilton had settled upon as Schuyler's colleague.[1] Rufus King was an eminent and able man, but he had just come from Massachusetts, and could not in the nature of things have had any following of his own. Hamilton, nevertheless, persisted, and King was chosen. The result was a rupture with the Livingstons, which was the probable cause of the defeat of Schuyler two years later, and of the election of Burr. King was no doubt an abler man than any of his competitors, but the Livingston alliance was very important to the Federalists, and it was a blunder to throw it away. Hamilton had, in fact, no genius for management, and his besetting danger was in his desire to force things through, and in his impatience of delay or of concession, when dealing with other men. In this case his imprudence brought strength to Burr, and was the beginning of Hamilton's many troubles in New York politics.

Meanwhile the day had come, the eventful 4th of March, fixed for the assembling of the new Congress. The evil habits of the old confederacy still clung to national affairs to such a degree that a quorum of both houses was not obtained until April 6. Then the votes were opened and counted, and George Washington

[1] Morgan Lewis to Hamilton, June 24, 1789, MS. letter.

was declared to be President by a unanimous vote; and John Adams, who had received the next highest number, obtained the Vice-Presidency. Washington and Adams, on being informed of their election, proceeded by slow stages to New York, where they were sworn in and the government was fairly organized. The great experiment was at last on trial.

CHAPTER V

THE TREASURY AND THE FINANCIAL POLICY

ALTHOUGH early spring saw the actual formation of the government of the United States, it was not until September 2 that the act passed establishing the Treasury Department. All eyes were turned to Hamilton as the man to fill this great office. Washington had already decided upon him, and Robert Morris had singled him out as the statesman suited above all others for the trying position which he himself had filled under the confederacy. Advisers were not wanting, tried friends and admirers, like Troup and Gouverneur Morris, who warned Hamilton of the trials he was about to encounter, and of the thorny path he must tread. They had reason enough on their side. Despite his politics, Hamilton, benefiting like other young patriots by the law excluding Tories from practice in the courts, had raised himself to a leading position at the bar, and had wealth and reputation within easy reach. All this quiet and assured prosperity must be sacrificed for a post beset with difficulties, of unceasing toil,

and with a paltry salary of thirty-five hundred dollars a year. There is, however, no indication that Hamilton wavered for a moment in his decision. He was convinced that he could render his best service to his country at the head of the Treasury, and he at once accepted the high office. It could not have been otherwise. His time had come, the great epoch of his life, and it was impossible to escape his destiny. He was only thirty-two years old, in the flower of his age and with the flush of youth upon him. The weapons which he had been forging for years hung at last complete and glittering before his eyes, and he was the last man to refuse to gird on the sword and draw it in the cause of good government.

Ten days after Hamilton's appointment Congress directed him to prepare a report upon the public credit, but this order, which led to the development of his whole financial policy, was only one of the many tasks allotted to him. It is not a little amusing to note how eagerly Congress, which had been ably and honestly struggling with the revenue, with commerce, and with a thousand details, fettered in all things by the awkwardness inherent in a legislative body, turned for relief to the new secretary. They knew Hamilton's reputation and his perfect familiarity with theories of finance and



Rob Morris

government, and they seem to have felt instinctively that he was a great minister of state with a well-defined policy for every exigency. In the course of a year he was asked to report, and did report, with full details, upon the raising, management, and collection of the revenue, including a scheme for revenue cutters; as to estimates of income and expenditure; as to the temporary regulation of the chaotic currency; as to navigation laws and the regulation of the coasting trade, after thorough consideration of a heap of undigested statistics; as to the post-office, for which he drafted a bill; as to the purchase of West Point; on the great question of public lands and a uniform system of managing them; and upon all claims against the government. Rapidly and effectively the secretary dealt with all these matters, besides drawing up as a voluntary suggestion a scheme for a judicial system. But in addition to all this multiplicity of business there were other matters, like the temporary regulation of the currency, requiring peremptory settlement. Money had to be found for the immediate and pressing wants of the new government before any system had been or could be adopted, and the only resources were the empty treasury and broken credit of the old confederacy. By one ingenious expedient or another, sometimes by

pledging his own credit, Hamilton got together what was absolutely needful, and without a murmur conquered these petty troubles at the very time when he was elaborating and devising a far-reaching policy. Then the whole financial machine of the Treasury Department, and a system of accounting, demanded instant attention. These intricate problems were solved at once, the machine constructed, and the system of accounts devised and put in operation; and so well were these difficult tasks performed that they still subsist, developing and growing with the nation, but at bottom the original arrangements of Hamilton. These complicated questions, answered so rapidly and yet so accurately in the first weeks of confusion incident to the establishment of a new government, show a familiarity and preparation as well as a readiness of mind of a most unusual kind. Yet while Hamilton was engaged in all this bewildering work, he was evolving the great financial policy at once broad, comprehensive, and minute, and after the recess in January he laid his ground plan before Congress in his first report upon the public credit, a state paper which marks an era in American history, and by which the massive corner-stone, from which the great structure of the federal government has risen, was securely laid.

It was with this report that Hamilton entered upon the most important part of his career, and at the same time upon the period in which he impressed his individuality strongly upon the history and development of the United States. The first report on the public credit was not only the beginning of a remarkable financial scheme which achieved a brilliant practical success, but with its successors which came quickly after it, from the fertile mind at the head of the Treasury, it carried out a far-reaching policy which affected, as it came to maturity, the character of the whole government, built up and welded together a powerful party, and founded a school of political thought which still endures and has always exercised a profound influence on our material growth and our political and constitutional system. Up to this time, great and valuable as Hamilton's services had been, they were simply those of a man of remarkable ability, having no peculiar mark about them. The intellect and personality of Hamilton have not left their stamp and superscription upon the Constitution as it went from the Philadelphia convention, but upon the government, the public policy, the political system which grew up under the Constitution, they made an indelible impression in those early and plastic years, and one which has never been effaced. In a word,

when Hamilton sent in his report on the public credit in January, 1790, from being a distinguished man he became also a typical leader, and, most important of all, an essential element in our history.

To attempt to give an abstract of this report would be labor wasted. With all his lucidity of statement, Hamilton was always concise, especially in his communications to Congress, and to such a degree that further condensation is out of the question. But to understand Hamilton and his influence as a great factor at the dawn of the history of the United States, it is sufficient to lay bare the main principles of his report. In these we can obtain the intent and significance of his policy, and then compare it with its results. After setting forth in general but striking terms the necessity of public credit, not merely as a means of raising money, but as an element of national greatness, and after dwelling on the need of the most rigid honor in all things connected with financial dealings, Hamilton states in a few curt sentences the objects to be attained. He says: —

"To justify and preserve the confidence of the most enlightened friends of good government; to promote the increasing respectability of the American name; to answer the calls of justice; to restore landed property to its due value; to furnish new resources

both to agriculture and commerce; *to cement more closely the union of the States;* to add to their security against foreign attack; *to establish public order on the basis of an upright and liberal policy;* — these are the great and invaluable ends to be secured by a proper and adequate provision, at the present period, for the support of public credit."

I have italicized the two sentences which seem to me to embody the most essential points of the whole policy. The cardinal doctrines of Hamilton, in questions of politics and government, were strength and order. The more intimate union of the States, effected by a common interest in the solvency and maintenance of a common government, was a sure instrument to promote strength. This was plain and is plainly stated, but the general expression, "to establish public order on the basis of an upright and liberal policy," covers, whether intentionally or not, a world of meaning, which finds explanation in the whole course of Hamilton's career and of his political thought. Public order usually is the condition precedent of sound finances. Here it is made the consequence. By the regulation of the finances, not only the strength of the government was to be increased, but public order was to be established. It was, in truth, the old idea which held a leading place in Hamilton's youthful scheme of a bank,

of building up a strong party in support of the government. This was not merely to invigorate an existing political party or to evolve a new one, although such a result was incidental, important, and expected. Hamilton's scheme went farther, seeking to create a strong and, so far as was possible and judicious, a permanent class all over the country, without regard to existing political affiliations, but bound to the government as a government, by the strongest of all ties, immediate and personal pecuniary interest. The wisdom of this was obvious, when the object was to sustain a great experiment; yet at the same time Hamilton's purpose was not simply by the spread of a popular loan to unite a numerous body of men in the support of the government, but chiefly and mainly to bring to his side a class already in existence, that which controlled the capital of the country. The full intent of the policy was to array property on the side of the government. That once done, the experiment, Hamilton felt, would succeed, and its powers, moreover, might then be much extended. He had been unable to introduce a class influence into the Constitution by limiting the suffrage for the President and Senate with a property qualification, but by his financial policy he could bind the existing class of wealthy men, comprising at that day

the aristocracy bequeathed by provincial times to the new system, and thus, if at all, assure to the property of the country a powerful influence upon the government.

The method by which these great ends were to be reached, as well as the others, hardly less important, which are also set forth in the sentence quoted above, was by funding and consolidating all the debts of the United States incurred in the war or growing out of it. The most immediate practical gain which Hamilton promised himself in this was, that the funds would supply that deficiency of a circulating medium under which the country labored, and this point he argued at length and with great ability. He proposed several schemes for funding, comprising various forms of annuities and of payment in order to attract all classes of creditors. Into these financial details it is not necessary to enter. To fund the whole debt at the existing rates of interest, he believed to be beyond the power of the country at that moment; and in view of the great improvement to be effected, and the appreciation of the debt which had already taken place, he demanded present concessions from the creditors. To use a modern phrase, he offered long bonds at a low rate of interest, four per cent., and short bonds at six per cent. He proposed to pay two thirds

of the debt in the new funds, to bear interest at once, and the remainder in land, or in funds which should bear the same rates of interest at some future time. The propositions were honorable and practicable, and involved ultimate full payment, so that, to creditors who had generally begun to regard their loans as hopelessly lost, they must have seemed positively brilliant. Hamilton further proposed a sinking fund, which was to be made up at the outset from a new loan of ten millions placed in the hands of commissioners for the purchase of certain classes of the debt, and for otherwise facilitating the financial operation of the government, and which was also to be the receptacle of all savings and surplus, and thus provide for the accumulation of the means necessary to meet and extinguish the debt as it became due. This was nothing more than the ordinary sinking fund, as it is used and understood at the present day, not only in all civilized governments, but in innumerable corporations. It was merely a means to provide for actual savings to be applied to the extinction of debt. But coming at a time when Pitt was using "sinking fund" as a term to conjure with, and by ingenious calculations of the rates of interest was perfecting a juggle which served to blind a whole generation of Englishmen, and which actually led them to

believe that debts could be extinguished, not by payment, but by further borrowing, this arrangement is interesting from its business-like simplicity and sense. There was nothing of Pitt's ingenuity about Hamilton's plan. To him the sinking fund was a convenient business device; nothing more. He had too keen a mind to be deceived himself, and he had no wish to confuse and befool others. His financial schemes were to be truthful and genuine, if nothing else; and he put forth his scheme of funding and sinking, not as the incantation of an enchanter, by which debts could be paid without saving, but as business-like arrangements by which honor could be restored, honesty and reputation retrieved, the nation strengthened, and the debt, so long as the necessary evil of its existence endured, become, by taking on a new form, a blessing instead of a curse to the business interests and moral tone of the whole country.

Such, in brief outline, were the objects at which Hamilton aimed, and the means by which he hoped to compass them. Nothing remained but to determine the subject-matter to be dealt with; and here came the crucial question of what constituted the debt of the United States. Few men questioned the value of the purposes set forth by Hamilton, for on the surface, and

in most cases from any point of view, they commended themselves to the hearty support of all sensible men. There were few, too, who objected to Hamilton's mode of funding; although at a later time in his career, and also since it has all passed into history, there has been some hostile criticism on this point, which I shall refer to again. But as to what constituted the debt, there were immediate, wide, and bitter differences of opinion resulting in the first great political struggle of the United States, and laying deep and solid foundations of party divisions. Hamilton divided the debt into three parts: the foreign debt, the domestic debt, and the debts of the States incurred in the cause of the Union during the war of the Revolution. All these together amounted in round numbers to above eighty millions, — hardly more than Mr. Sherman saved in a twelvemonth in the interest account of the United States, but a very terrible sum in the year 1790. Every one was agreed about the foreign debt; every one was likewise agreed as to paying the domestic debt, but there were wide differences as to how and to whom this latter payment should be made. These two classes covered about fifty-four millions of the debt; and then came the state debts, amounting to twenty-five millions, very unevenly distributed, bristling with opposing

interests, the great bone of contention, and a subject of long and sore conflict. Thus the work was mapped out, and Hamilton concluded his report with estimates of ways and means, a scheme for raising revenue by duties on teas, wines, and spirits, and in the background a plan for an excise.

Before discussing the fate of this great report and its momentous political results, it is best to review briefly the other reports which followed close upon it, and were in reality parts of one comprehensive scheme. In this way the whole broad financial policy of Hamilton comes into view, and all the causes being thus understood and grouped together, it becomes far easier to appreciate the effects upon the country and upon its history.

The assumption of the state debts made an increase of revenue absolutely necessary, and at the close of the year 1790 Hamilton took the next step in perfecting his policy by sending to Congress his second report on the public credit, urging the establishment of an excise which he had already suggested, but which had been laid aside. Some additions he showed could be made to the duties imposed, but these were insufficient, and it became necessary to raise revenue elsewhere. Hamilton's general theory was to have as little direct taxation as possible, and to raise

as much revenue from articles of luxury as was consistent with successful collection. Having carried the duties on imports as high as he felt they would bear, he turned naturally to the domestic manufacture of spirits as the best and most proper resource. No one now will question that by all the best principles of political economy Hamilton was right in his choice, and that he selected the most appropriate subject for taxation. The revenue being essential, this was the least burdensome way to raise it, and the subject was one which in its nature should always be taxed before anything else, and as heavily as it will bear. On economic principles, the excise on spirits suggested by Hamilton requires neither explanation nor defense. The real difficulty was political, not economical. It was true that excises had been laid and collected by several of the States without objection. Hamilton in fact cited these precedents, but to the popular mind they were not precedents at all, for the people did not try taxation by the States according to the principles which they applied in judging of taxation by the general government. An excise laid by the States was like all other taxes; an excise laid by the general government met in the popular feeling the famous definition given to it by Dr. Johnson. The attempt to raise an internal revenue had led to the Revolution.

The government of England was external, and the consequent hatred of government of that description, combined with states-rights, had proved the ruin of the Confederation, and was the greatest menace to the new Union. The old confederate government had laid or had attempted to lay duties; the new government was formed for that purpose, and to the customs which everybody expected there was no objection. But although the right of the central government under the Constitution to lay an excise was perfectly clear, it seemed to come from an external government; it was new and unexpected, and was calculated to rekindle the slumbering animosity against anything resembling external power, and to revive all the old jealousy of the states-rights party. All this Hamilton saw plainly enough. He endeavored to disarm opposition by a careful diminution of the hated powers of the officers of the excise, taking from them their usual summary jurisdiction and carefully limiting their right of search. But if he was cautious, he was also determined. Revenue was necessary, and an excise on spirits was the best resource from an economical point of view. Moreover, the secretary was bent on vindicating the right of the government to collect an internal revenue. It was an important assertion of power, and one which ought to be at the com-

mand of the government, and which if once carried into successful practice would be another element of strength. It was part of the general scheme, economical and political; it was a bold and perhaps a perilous move leading to grave consequences, but Hamilton made it unflinchingly, and then turned all his energies to securing its successful operation.

national bank

The day after that which gave date to the excise report saw the report on the national bank transmitted to the House of Representatives. This report embodied in an elaborated and perfected form the fruit of Hamilton's earliest meditations on finance in the dark days of the war. In a national bank he then saw the surest staff to aid the tottering steps of the young and struggling republic; and now, in the plenitude of his power at the head of the Treasury and of a vigorous party, he turned to it as a fundamental element of a broad and national financial policy. The report was an elaborate essay on national banks with a full display of their advantages, forcible replies to all the anticipated and usual objections, and a clear but detailed plan of the bank which the secretary wished Congress to establish. The late Earl of Beaconsfield once announced that it was necessary to educate his party; and in a similar fashion Hamilton began his report by confessing

that he wished to educate the public, and that this must be his excuse for such a lengthy presentation of a subject so simple and so familiar to the "superior information" of the Congress he addressed. Putting ourselves, in the wisdom of our day and generation, on the same plane as that which Hamilton's friends in Congress occupied a century ago, we can lay aside the educational details and arguments on banks and banking. These same details and arguments are admirably arranged and most lucidly expressed; they were full of instruction then; it is not impossible that they might be of value in that way even to the present enlightened age; but still they are at bottom argumentative and instructive, and are far from easy reading. They do not help us particularly to appreciate the character, influence, and meaning in history of the man who wrote them down, so we may fairly dispense with them here, and confine ourselves to the great principles of the report as an essential part of a broad general scheme.

The plan of the bank was a good one, practical and successful; but that, too, is not of importance here. The bank was to have the support of the government, and the government was to have the use of the funds, and to a certain extent and in a last resort the control of the bank. The objects to be attained were in the

main the same as those aimed at by the funding system. The economical problem which confronted the United States was how to develop their vast material resources. The difficulty lay in injured credit, both public and private, in lack of capital and circulating medium, and in the almost complete deficiency of the financial machinery necessary to the conduct of domestic trade and foreign commerce. In a national bank Hamilton perceived the means of restoring general confidence, so important to large and remunerative business transactions. In the issue of bank notes he saw a large addition to the circulating medium of the country, and a great expansion of credit. These notes would have all the strength imparted by the close alliance between the bank and the government, without the dangerous qualities inherent in irredeemable government paper. Facilities for exchange and for the transaction of business throughout the States, not merely for the government in the collection of taxes and in all its other dealings, but for individuals everywhere, would be promoted to a degree which we can hardly conceive without picturing to ourselves a community almost utterly destitute of all the appliances by which the vast concerns of the business world are now kept in daily motion. All these great benefits flowing from the national bank were

correct in theory, and proved equally so in practice. They were all sought by Hamilton for the great purpose of advancing the development of the resources of the country, which, economically speaking, was the pole-star of his whole financial policy. They were intended to facilitate trade, encourage enterprise, enhance the value of land, and stimulate at once and as strongly as possible both agriculture and commerce.

In the bank, too, there was also a valuable engine for the performance of the financial work of the Treasury, and a fresh source of power and strength to the government. In the same manner as the funds, the bank would create a class, or call forth one already in existence in support of the government. The stockholders of the bank would be even more united and more active than the holders of the funds, because they would have more to gain. Then, too, in addition to this powerful body of allies, the government would find in the resources of the bank a great assistance in time of distress, and a uniform system of finance and of bank notes everywhere receivable would replace the chaos of thirteen jarring States, each with its own banks issuing notes which were universally distrusted beyond their own borders. The power and purposes of a national bank were seen as plainly by Hamilton's opponents as by his friends, but its

immense economical value and necessary usefulness prevailed. The policy of a national bank thus founded by Hamilton has never been permanently laid aside. When the charter of the first expired, the very party, and some of the very men even who had most fiercely resisted it, established another. A few years later, and the president of the national bank struggled with the President of the United States on not unequal terms, a curious verification of the power which Hamilton believed he should find in a bank, and of the possible danger of that power if arrayed against the government, as predicted by Hamilton's opponents. Then came an interregnum of state banks, and again difficulty and distress led to a return to Hamilton's policy. The system of national banks has replaced the Bank of the United States and its branches, doing away with the danger of extreme centralization in a single institution, which would be at the present time of perilous magnitude. But though the form has been thus wisely changed, the policy of national banking and the governing principles are still those laid down by Hamilton, and we live now under the sound, wise policy in this respect which he devised and carried through nearly a century ago.

But there is another side still to Hamilton's plan of a national bank, which overshadows

all its other purposes and results, important and far-reaching as they were. This was the constitutional side. The opposition denied the right of the government of the United States to erect a national bank, and Hamilton evoked the implied powers of the Constitution to bring him victory. The struggle went into the cabinet, and Hamilton's argument not only satisfied Washington, but has carried conviction to a majority of the American people ever since. This argument on the constitutionality of the national bank, as a piece of legal reasoning, is the most important which Hamilton ever produced, not only in itself but because it can be tried by the highest possible standard. In McCulloch *v.* Maryland, Chief Justice Marshall went over precisely the same ground on the same question, deciding the point, as is well known, in Hamilton's favor. There are few arguments which will bear to be placed side by side with those of Marshall, but Hamilton's stands the comparison without suffering in the trial. The able and luminous decision of the chief justice adds nothing to the argument of the secretary and takes nothing from it, nor is the work of the latter inferior to the opinion of the judge in clearness and force of expression. I am far from meaning to imply by this that Hamilton was as a lawyer the equal of

Marshall, who stands at the head of all lawyers, especially on constitutional questions. But it may be truly said that a man who could in much haste produce an argument which can be placed beside an opinion of the great chief justice, involving the very same question, is fairly entitled to stand in the front rank of lawyers, and can be credited with the possession of legal talents of the highest order.

Interesting as this comparison is to the student of Hamilton's life and character, the historical weight and meaning of the argument lies in the calling into vigorous life the implied powers of the Constitution. This great doctrine, embodying the principle of liberal construction, was the most formidable weapon in the armory of the Constitution; and when Hamilton grasped it he knew, and his opponents felt, that here was something capable of conferring on the federal government powers of almost any extent. Beside the doctrine of the implied powers, all the other schemes of Hamilton to give strength to the new system, far-reaching and striking as they were, sank into insignificance. Hamilton did not shrink. Strength, order, and national force were his objects, and in the implied powers he could find everything that he needed, or that the government could need, provided his progress was not arrested.

On the doctrine thus boldly laid down as to the bank, great parties have arisen and divided ever since, and a large part of our history, constitutional and political, has turned on the implied powers first seized by Hamilton. The growth of nationality and the conversion of the agreement of thirteen States into the charter of a nation have been largely the development of the implied powers. This is the central point of Hamilton's whole policy, and in his bold declaration of the implied powers of the Constitution he laid bare his one predominant purpose of building up a powerful national government.

In a little more than a month after the transmission of the report on the national bank, the indefatigable secretary of the treasury sent to Congress his report on the establishment of the mint. This was of course an integral part of his financial policy; but it was purely financial, and had none of the wide political and constitutional importance which attaches to the other reports. This essay on coinage, for such it really was, shows all Hamilton's thoroughness of treatment and clearness of thought and expression, applied to an intricate and difficult series of questions. The most interesting feature of the report to us lies in Hamilton's advocacy of a double standard. His argument was

moderate in tone; he fully admitted the necessity of conforming in this matter to the practice of other countries and of the commercial world, and especially of England, with whom we had our largest dealings. He also frankly admitted the difficulties attendant on maintaining a proper ratio between the metals, so that one by being overvalued should not drive the other out. But after all deductions, and with full allowance for all possible risks, he comes clearly to the conclusion that in the long run greater steadiness is acquired by maintaining a double rather than a single standard, and that a better circulating medium, larger, more convenient, and less subject to dangerous fluctuations, is thus attained. This principle was adopted at the time, and with a short interval has been the policy of our government ever since. We now depart from the views expressed by Hamilton with reference to a double standard by disregarding our relations on this point with our principal customers and by grossly overvaluing the inferior metal.

In discussing the subject of coinage Hamilton advised the decimal system, with the dollar as a unit. He examined minutely the intricate details of alloy, gave a full plan for the working force and organization of a mint, and explained a careful scheme for coining and for

the methods and charges of the government in this work. The report as a whole is of interest merely as showing Hamilton's knowledge and industry in every branch of finance, and the general soundness of his views, which in this instance have been in the main closely followed ever since.

Some months later, at the close of this same year 1791, Hamilton put the finishing touch to his financial policy by his report on manufactures, the most elaborate, and economically the most important, of all his reports, and at the same time the most far-reaching politically. It rested on the implied powers of the Constitution, and was intended to do more than anything else toward the development of the resources of the country, the purpose nearest Hamilton's heart, and toward rendering the nation as strong and independent materially as in all other ways.

That Hamilton looked for immediate results from his report on manufactures may well be doubted. He certainly knew that progress would be deliberate and growth slow in this direction. But he wished to sow the seed, to prepare the way and lay down the lines to be followed, and so much he did. From Hamilton's report on manufactures have sprung the protectionist policy and the so-called "Ameri-

can" system of Clay. Hamilton was in his grave many years before protection was seriously taken up as a well-defined system, but when it came, stimulated, it is true, by the mistaken acts of his great opponent, it came as he had foreseen it would come, and it succeeded as he had wished it to succeed. Upon the principles then laid down, and upon the policy then boldly sketched with a master hand, parties have divided and a great economical system has been built up. Even after a hasty examination, we can see in this paper, better than anywhere else, the grasp, and at the same time the long reach, of Hamilton's mind and thought. He was familiar with the science of political economy, then in its infancy, and with the writings of Adam Smith, the founder of that science, whom he admired and quoted, but whom he did not follow. The first pages of the report are occupied with a brief discussion of the comparative value of agriculture and commerce. The arguments of those who give unquestioned preference to the former are met and refuted, and the conclusion is that these two pursuits are at least of equal value, that they serve each other, and that it is best that both should flourish. He then sets forth under seven heads the advantages to be gained from the establishment of manufactures, — division of

labor, extension of the use of machinery, additional employment to classes of the community not ordinarily engaged in business, promotion of immigration, greater scope for the diversity of talents and disposition which discriminate men from each other, a more ample and various field for enterprise, and the creation in some instances of a new, and in all of a more certain and steady, demand for the surplus products of the soil. The first objection is that a state thinly settled, with unbounded opportunities for agriculture, and able to buy manufactured articles from other nations, attains in this natural way the best and most profitable division of labor. To this Hamilton replies: "If the system of perfect liberty to industry and commerce were the prevailing system of nations, the arguments which dissuade a country in the predicament of the United States from the zealous pursuit of manufactures would doubtless have great force. . . . But the system which has been mentioned is far from characterizing the general policy of nations. The prevalent one has been regulated by an opposite spirit. . . . In such a position of things the United States cannot exchange with Europe on equal terms. . . . Remarks of this kind are not made in the spirit of complaint. . . . It is for the United States to consider by what means they can

render themselves least dependent on the combinations, right or wrong, of foreign policy."

The objection that industry if left to itself will find out the most useful and profitable employment, and therefore should not be forced by government, he meets by pointing out the strong influence of habit and of the spirit of imitation, including "the fear of want of success in untried enterprises, the intrinsic difficulties of first essays, and the bounties, premiums, and other artificial encouragements with which foreign nations second the exertions of their own citizens." He discusses this at length, taking substantially the same ground as Mill in his "Political Economy," that protection for nascent industries in order to remove the obstacles of starting is wise and proper. He then examines at length the practical difficulties of scarcity of hands, high wages, and want of capital, showing that the first two are exaggerated, and need not be seriously injurious, and that the third can be overcome by improved credit, the expansion of the circulating medium by the funds, and through attracting foreign capital. To the objection that protection tends to create monopolies and benefit a class at the expense of the rest of the community, he replies, first, that the increase of the price of commodities, even at the outset, is much exaggerated, and does not

always occur; and, second, that in the end the establishment of manufactures is a benefit and profit to all. The same reasoning applies to the objection that one section of the country is aided at the expense of a loss to the other. In the aggregate and ultimately, all must benefit, and agriculture will probably be directly stimulated, as in the case of cotton, for which manufactories in the North will at once open a market. Then are shown the benefits to trade from diversity of pursuits and product; and, lastly, the wealth, and above all the independence and security, to be gained by manufactures. In the vast territory of the United States almost everything can be produced, and in the successful establishment of manufactures Hamilton saw the road to an absolute independence far beyond the reach of foreign nations.

With patient detail all important articles of industry are examined separately, every small advantage or disadvantage weighed and pointed out, and every form of protection and governmental aid carefully discussed. In the latter are included premiums on invention and a patent system, while a strong plea is made in favor of assistance from the government in the construction of roads and bridges. Here Hamilton introduces the doctrine of internal improvements, destined to be for so long a time a

subject of division; and for this, as for protection, he finds his constitutional authority in the theory of the implied powers, and in the broad expression of the right "to provide for the general welfare." His plan for the encouragement and establishment of manufactures was by a combination of bounties and protective duties, the surplus revenue of the latter to supply the funds for the former.

In the year 1791, with all nations protecting their manufactures, Hamilton was a strong protectionist, aiming chiefly at the development of nascent industries. What he would be to-day must be matter of speculation, but it is safe to say that in the presence of the great results of his policy he would not be likely to abandon it. The report on manufactures, as it stands, contains the best and soundest argument, not on the general question of free trade and protection, but on that question as connected with the United States. "Most general theories, however," says Hamilton at the outset, with reference to free trade, "admit of numerous exceptions," and therefore he confines himself to the United States, and has little to do with abstract theory, except by way of respectful mention. Hamilton's report, as an argument in favor of protection, must be tried solely with reference to the United States, under all the

circumstances surrounding them, and with all their opportunities and possibilities. If it is put to this test, setting aside all its literary and scientific merits, it remains the best and most complete argument for a protective policy in the United States which we possess. No new and fundamental principle has been added to Hamilton's reasoning, but his report has been a welcome armory to generations of disputants, and is still waiting to be successfully answered and overthrown.

The report on manufactures completed the financial policy devised and carried through by Hamilton and the Federalists. During his official term he sent to Congress, of course, very many reports besides those which are here discussed; but in these four, indeed in three of them, his policy in all essential points is embodied. From these reports came the funding system, the revenue system, the sinking fund, national banking, the currency, and the first enunciation of the protective policy. They carried with them the great doctrine of the implied powers of the Constitution, and opened up the important question of internal improvements. So far as public policy could do it, they laid the foundation of the material prosperity of the United States. As Gouverneur Morris said, what was left of the Revolution

grounded on finance, and so finance was the first all-absorbing and all-important question which confronted the new government of 1789. A successful financial policy meant the successful establishment of the new government. Behind all this lay the great constitutional doctrines which Hamilton raised up and defended, and the still greater political influence of his work. Hamilton was striving for a vigorous national life, and his chief object was to impart to the central government the greatest possible strength. He armed the government with credit and with a productive revenue; he won for it the hearty good-will of the business world; he gave it a potent ally in the national bank; by the funding system and the bank he drew out and welded together, with the strong influence of pecuniary interest, a powerful class, which knew no state lines; and by his protective policy and internal improvements he aimed to create yet another vigorous body of supporters, and give the government still more strength and popularity. It was a great policy, the work of a master-mind looking far into the future. It was the foundation of a great party, and the corner-stone from which the federal government was built up. It only remains to trace its history and results, as it was gradually unfolded before Congress and the people, and became the central point of politics and parties.

CHAPTER VI

THE RESULTS OF THE FINANCIAL POLICY

The publication of the first report on the public credit was awaited with intense eagerness. When it came, there was, of course, much excitement and a general rise in the securities of the bankrupt Confederation. Eager speculators hurried over the country to buy up the debt, and the secretary of the treasury already began to be regarded as one who could make the fortune not only of the government but of individuals. Congress having decided that they would not listen to the perilous oratory of Hamilton, but confine him to writing, took up the report. As to the payment of the foreign debt, all were agreed, and that portion was adopted without discussion; but on the payment of the domestic debt a fierce conflict arose. The root of this opposition was in the old repudiating, disintegrating spirit of the Confederation which still survived, and which found even plainer expression in resistance to Hamilton's proposition to pay the arrears of interest in the same way as all other indebtedness

No one, however, was ready to take this stand against the domestic debt and advocate its absolute repudiation; perhaps, indeed, no one really desired such a proceeding in its fullest extent, although the old demoralization was really at the bottom of the hostility. The opposition sought to thwart the secretary and maim his plans, on grounds in appearance more reasonable and certainly more likely to arouse popular sympathy. They found their opening in the speculation which had begun with the adoption of the Constitution, and which reached a fever heat on the publication of the secretary's report, when the certificates of debt had bounded up to high prices at a single jump. The obvious cry was against the greedy and successful speculator in possession of the certificates, which he had obtained for a song from the original holders. The "original holder" now figured as a patriot cruelly wronged, and in many instances he was a soldier, which gave an additional point to the lamentations in his behalf, raised generally by men who, under the old Confederation, which still held their affections, had flouted with utter indifference all claims, both of soldier and patriotic lender.

But this inconsistency did not affect the value of the argument as a political cry. And there was, too, some ground for it in many cases of

undoubted hardship. Hamilton and his friends freely admitted the force of this objection, but the secretary argued that the great object was to restore the credit and good name of the United States, to do what was just in the majority of instances and to the greatest number, and he urged, in conclusion, that any other course was impracticable. His reasoning could not be answered, but it did not quell the conflict. One proposition was, in cases where the certificate was in the hands of a purchaser, to pay him only what he had himself paid the original holder. The violation of contracts thus involved was the fatal objection of Hamilton; but this plan carried with it, moreover, a very deep mark of the lurking desire to get out of debt by partial repudiation. To the surprise of every one, Madison came out in favor of discrimination; but he admitted that the certificates must be paid in full; and proposed a plan for a division between the original holder and the purchaser so hopelessly impracticable, that he could muster only thirteen votes in his support. Madison shrank from anything like dishonesty, but he was beginning to break from the friends of the Constitution and from the party to which he naturally belonged, because he felt the drift of Virginian sentiment, and was not strong enough to withstand the pres-

sure. In this struggle, the supporters of the secretary, known as the Federalists, and hitherto acting merely as friends of the Constitution, first gained real cohesion as a party devoted to a given policy. Their only opponent of ability was Madison, and his opposition was rendered abortive and impracticable by his honesty and logic. The debate was long and heated, but the Federalists, having ability, sound reason, and the advantage of position on their side, prevailed. They also carried through the payment of the arrears of interest. Only one point remained, and that was the crucial test, the assumption of the state debts. Much had been done before this point was reached. Even if Congress went no farther than they had already gone, the credit of the country was reasonably safe; but the policy of the secretary would have been sadly mutilated. Public credit would not be rounded and complete; and, above all, the financial policy would have been deprived of much of its political and constitutional effects upon parties, upon the strength of the government, and upon the relations of the States. Sharp as the battle had been over discrimination in the payment of the domestic debt, it was a mere preliminary skirmish compared to the conflict upon assumption. The lines were clearly drawn, for Hamilton himself

had marked them out. Parties were marshaled now, not on the acceptance of the Constitution, but as to the policy of the government created by the Constitution; and on the question of assumption they faced each other for the first vigorous, well-defined political contest in the history of the United States.

There was no need here to cast about for popular arguments, as in the case of the domestic debt, where the real grounds and objects of opposition were not clearly conceived, or were better hidden from view. There was an abundance of subsidiary and obvious arguments brought forward to the effect that too great a burden would be laid upon the people; that the state debts could not with justice be saddled upon the United States; that assumption was unfair in benefiting some States largely and not helping others, and among them some of the most deserving, at all. All these points were raised, and local feeling ran very high, particularly upon the last, leading to much angry recrimination and comparison of services in the Revolution. But after all was said, the most vigorous attack was against the chief purpose of the secretary, the end which he here had in view above all others of strengthening the national government by this large increase of its creditors, transferring the interest of a pow-

erful class from the States to the Union, and in this way binding the States closer together and weakening enormously the vigor of the state-rights sentiments. Politically it was a bold and masterly stroke, but Hamilton's opponents saw at what it aimed as plainly as he did himself. A loud cry went up against this centralizing movement. The anti-Federalists, with reviving dislike of the Constitution, felt with sudden keenness the strength and pressure of the bonds which the minister of finance was drawing closer and closer about the people and the States, and they struggled desperately to get free.

Hamilton had foreseen this opposition, but he had reckoned on certain forces to sustain him, and he did not reckon in vain. His first ally was the enthusiasm aroused by his own policy; his second, the confidence and interest of the capitalists and merchants; his third, the direct pecuniary gain to certain States in the success of assumption; and his fourth and most important, the powerful body of able men in and out of Congress who desired a strong central government, whose objects were the same as his own, and who had found in him a leader about whom they could gather in solid phalanx. These forces prevailed. After a long and heated conflict, assumption was carried in committee of the whole, but the majority, although compact and

unyielding, was narrow. Delay served the opposition well. When the resolutions got out of committee and came up in the House, the members from North Carolina, at last in the Union, had taken their seats, and they turned the scale against assumption. By their aid the resolution was recommitted, and the Federalists, determined to have all or nothing, sent the rest of the measures back with it. Again the party opposed to assumption prevailed, and the whole policy was at a stand. Feeling ran very high, and ugly murmurs of dissolution began to be heard. It looked as if the measures, destined above all others to consolidate the new Union, would wreck it at the very start. Hamilton had summoned his spirits, and they had come to him. All the forces he had calculated upon had responded and done their work, but a new factor had been introduced and they could do no more. The dead-lock was as perilous as it was unforeseen, but the adverse majority was very small, only two votes, and Hamilton was not only determined but fertile in resources. He would not yield one jot of his financial policy, but he was perfectly ready to give up something else; and in the site of the new capital, the federal city, he found a suitable victim for the sacrifice.

This matter of the seat of government had

excited great controversy and feeling between States and sections. Whether the future capital should be in New York or Pennsylvania, in Virginia or Maryland; whether this inestimable boon should fall to the North or to the South, was a burning question second only to assumption. Local prejudice and local pride were raised to white heat on this momentous issue. To Hamilton all this was supremely indifferent. Much of his strength and somewhat of his weakness as a public man came from the fact that, while he was purely and intensely national in opinion, and was devotedly attached to the United States, he was utterly devoid of local feeling and of state pride. There is no evidence that he cared one whit, except as a matter of mere abstract convenience, where Congress fixed the site of the federal city; but he was keenly alive to the fact that everybody about him cared a great deal, and whether reasonably or not was of no consequence. The party which favored assumption were, as a rule, on the side of a northern capital, and had prevailed. The party which resisted assumption favored a southern capital, and had been beaten. To gain the necessary votes for assumption Hamilton determined to sacrifice what he justly thought was a perfectly trivial question, and thus save the financial policy which he rightly considered to

be of vital importance, and the very corner-stone of the new government. To carry out this scheme he needed the alliance of a Southern leader, and he pitched upon the man fated to become his great opponent, — the leader and type of one school of thought and politics, as Hamilton was himself the leader and type of the other.

Thomas Jefferson had just returned from France and taken his place at the head of Washington's cabinet. He came back with both body and brain dressed in the French fashion. His subtle, ingenious mind was full of the ideas of the French Revolution, then beginning in Paris. But except for his belief in liberty and humanity, which was born with him and which he did not go to Paris to learn, the wild ravings of the Jacobin clubs and the doctrines of Marat and Robespierre were as little a part of the real man as his French clothes. He would use the ideas of French democracy so long as they were useful and a fit covering for his real purposes, and then he would lay them aside as he did his French coat when it was worn out. With his mind thus occupied, Jefferson had come home to an America very different from the one he had left. A new government, with the inception and plan of which he had had but little sympathy, had been constructed, and the foundations of a

strong state were already rising among the ruins of the old confederacy. He found a vigorous party, led for the most part by new men, arrayed in defense of a strong central government, and urging forward all measures calculated to invigorate it. Opposed to them were a body of men, numerous, it is true, but scattered and disorganized, with no possible party ground except resistance to the Constitution and all its works. Jefferson, with his keen perceptions, saw at a glance the folly of opposition to the Constitution; but as he surveyed the field on which he had just arrived it was by no means easy to determine what position to take. Nevertheless, while he waited and watched for developments, he had to do something, and that something, as was most natural, was to give his support to the administration of which he was a part, and to its measures, which then consisted of Hamilton's financial policy, hanging in the balance on the decision of Congress as to assumption. Jefferson saw as plainly as anybody the scope of the financial policy and the intrinsic merit of assumption. He had, moreover, no prejudices at that time against the author of the policy. With no line marked out for his conduct, and ready, until events decided otherwise, to sustain the administration, he fell in easily enough with the schemes of his colleague. There was a little talk

and a little dinner, and Hamilton agreed to secure votes for a southern capital, and Jefferson promised to do the same for assumption. It would be an error to treat this as a bargain or compromise between opposing factions, for it was the work of two cabinet ministers favoring the same policy. Hamilton gained success for his great plans. Jefferson by his personal influence helped to carry through the measures of the administration of which he was a member, and obtained in return the concession of the site of the capital, which was of value to him as a Southern leader. In after times, when Hamilton stood to Jefferson and his party as the representative of all that was bad, the memory of this transaction of 1790, and of a friendly alliance with the great Federalist, became troublesome. Jefferson would fain have erased from history the whole business. He wished the world to believe that the wicked, aristocratic, monarchical Federalists had always been his foes, and had found in him their mightiest opponent. Yet there was the ugly fact that he had himself turned the scale in favor of one of their fundamental measures. His manner of dealing with the problem was characteristic. He did not explain it away in his lifetime, for he might have met with awkward contradiction. But he set it all down for the benefit of posterity, and then

excused himself for having supported a measure of the administration of which he was a member, and for having aided the accursed Federalists, by saying that he was "duped by Hamilton."

It is impossible to resist pausing over this statement, for it is one of the most amusing ever made even by Jefferson, and shows a confidence in the credulity of posterity which is not flattering. In justice to Jefferson it must be said that, as long as he had made up his mind to get himself out of what he considered a scrape, this was the only excuse he could make. But it was, unluckily, a most clumsy and transparent deception. Thomas Jefferson had his weaknesses and his failings, but an imperfect knowledge of human nature and human character was not among them. In the difficult art of understanding his fellow men he was unrivaled, and he was never deceived by any man, unless by himself and as to his own motives. On the other hand, Hamilton was the very last man to succeed in duping others, and it would be difficult to find anything more impossible to Hamilton than the feat attributed to him by his rival. He had a directness of thought and action which was always remarkable, and at times overbearing and intolerant. It may well be doubted whether he could have successfully duped any one, even if he had

tried, and he certainly had far too much sense to have attempted such an experiment on so unpromising a subject as Jefferson.

But we are indebted to Jefferson, and to his inability to let well alone, for the details of this whole matter, since the other side held their tongues. The Federalists were not, as a party, given to useless chatter, while Hamilton as usual went straight to his mark, called out unexpected resources, and said nothing about it. Congress took up the funding measures again, and the old angry wrangling went on even after a disagreeable consciousness that they were beaten in some unknown way had crept over the opposition. When the decisive moment came, their fears were fully confirmed. The capital went to the Potomac and assumption was voted. The first great battle had now been fought in all its parts and the secretary had won.

The plans for the revenue, for the excise, for the mint, were adopted in principle, and substantially as Hamilton advised. The secretary's innocent suggestion, that the image and symbols on the coins might be made to have an educational bearing, led to a proposal to stamp on one side of the coins the head of the President for the time being. This harmless proposition produced a debate amusing to us, but

very earnest, heated, and real a hundred years ago. The upshot of it all was the adoption of the head of Liberty for the coins, and the discussion has no value except as showing the state of public feeling. From this utterly insignificant controversy we see that when Hamilton sought to advance the cause of strong centralized government and of an aristocratic republic he was not crying in the wilderness. He appealed to clearly marked opinions, entertained by a body of men powerful by their talents if not by their numbers. On the other hand, there appears an immense amount of ill-defined sentiment cherished by a majority of the people, but in a party sense ill-regulated and incoherent, which turned longingly back toward the days of a shattered confederacy and sovereign States, which was thoroughly democratic, and looked with morbid suspicion on everything, no matter what, which tended to lend strength or dignity to the central government. It was this opposition which met Hamilton at every point, and which, as it felt his strong hand drawing the bonds of federal and national government more and more tightly, detected aristocracy in every public office, and scented monarchy in the image and superscription of the coins; while among the party of the secretary were to be found those who, with all their wise policy and

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high purposes, believed forms and titles essential not merely to dignity but to strength. The truth, as usual, lay somewhere between the extremes illustrated by the trifling symbols on which excessive partisans set a high price.

The next really great measure in the financial policy gave rise to a stubborn contest which was carried through both houses of Congress and into the cabinet, there to receive its final decision at the hands of Washington. The opposition, which had been aroused by the assumption of the state debts, to the strengthening and concentrating effect of the financial policy, cried out loudly against the additional bond of union disclosed in the bank. They railed against the class which was thus being bound to the government, and against the capitalists who were being brought to the side of the administration. They pointed out that the South and agriculture were sacrificed to the North and trade. But all was vain. Hamilton was now on the flood-tide of success, and the national bank passed by a good majority. The most formidable weapon employed against it was the constitutional argument used by Madison, and, as the President was known to have doubts on this point, the last and strongest stand was made in the cabinet. Jefferson, Randolph, and Madison severally gave Washington

written arguments against the bank. In great haste and pressed by business, Hamilton made the famous reply which has already been discussed, and which gained Washington's adherence. In defending the bank, Hamilton established the doctrine of the implied powers, — a matter infinitely more potent and more far-reaching than the establishment of the great financial machine which called it forth.

The last of the reports, that on manufactures, was economically more important than any of its predecessors, but it had no immediate results. Congress had already discussed the question vaguely, and had done something to favor home production and American commerce. The question of protection or free trade was constantly in men's minds, but a system was of slow growth. Hamilton pointed to the road to be followed, and other men traveled in it, among the first Jefferson and Madison with their plan of "allowances" for the fisheries, while at the same time they denounced the theory, its author, and all his works, including "protection and bounties." Hamilton marked out clearly and fully a plan for the development of industry, trade, and commerce. He turned the current of thought, he influenced the future, but the task was too mighty, the scheme was too vast to be carried out at once, or in fact otherwise than

piecemeal, although its suggestion was a fit termination to the great work which he had accomplished.

Thus was the financial policy completed, adopted, and put in operation as Hamilton designed it. The only mischance was the speculation which began with the debt certificates, was fostered by the success of the bank, and expanded into a wild mania, and consequent panic and disaster. From the outset the secretary had striven to check this spirit, of which he saw the evil and danger. He repelled his friends who sought information, and did all that was possible to cool the excitement. He strove in vain, and then was blamed for the speculation, the rapid fortunes, and the swift disaster alike.

The only miscalculation made by Hamilton was in regard to the rate of interest, which he supposed would fall, but which, owing to the marvelous rapidity of material development and the consequent employment of capital, really rose. The error was almost unavoidable, and it was quite harmless. The criticisms which have been made on this famous series of measures have been various and contradictory. It was said at the time that Hamilton made the debt too permanent, but on the other hand it was also urged that he was putting too great a burden on the people, and the shorter the loan

the greater the immediate burden. In this he observed a just mean and a wise moderation. The unexpected rate of growth in the country showed afterwards that the debt might have been paid more rapidly, but at the moment Hamilton's anticipations of revenue were generally regarded as absurdly sanguine. The most forcible criticism, which was made either then or since, was that the financial policy was too strong, that it put too great a strain upon the infant experiment, ventured too much, ran too great a risk, and came near causing shipwreck. Hamilton reasoned that, if his financial policy could be made successful, a good national government might be built up, and that if it proved too strong and the new system gave way, then the Constitution was not worth preserving. Of the soundness of this argument, as it seems to me, there can be no doubt. But after all, the best evidence is in results. There was no public credit. Hamilton created it. There was no circulating medium, no financial machinery; he supplied them. Business was languishing, and business revived under the treasury measures. There was no government, no system with life in it, only a paper constitution. Hamilton exercised the powers granted by the Constitution, pointed out those which lay hidden in its dry clauses, and gave vitality to the lifeless instru-

ment. He drew out the resources of the country, he exercised the powers of the Constitution, he gave courage to the people, he laid the foundations of national government,—and this was the meaning and result of the financial policy.

CHAPTER VII

PARTY CONTESTS

In carrying through his measures, Hamilton had found in the friends of the Constitution material for a political party. The Federalists, when the new scheme adopted by their efforts went into operation in March, 1789, were a very different body from that which stood about the administration after the passage of the treasury measures. When the first Congress assembled, the Federalists had achieved their immediate object, and were waiting for the progress of events. They were like a body of volunteers, who had rushed together to fight a battle immediately before them, and when the victory had been won and the enemy scattered they were but loosely held together, and, as they stood looking about rather vaguely, dispersion was quite as probable as organization. To the Federalists Hamilton came as a leader. He gave them new objects, he raised still higher the standard of better government, showed them how the Constitution was to be made to bear fruit, and that its adoption was merely the be-

ginning of the great work for which they had come forward. When the financial policy was finally embodied in legislation, the band of volunteers had become a compact, well-disciplined army, a strong party with a policy which showed great things done, and stretched forward to the future, pointing out what was still to be accomplished. This was the political success of the financial policy, but it was not without its penalty to the triumphant Federalists in general and to Hamilton in particular.

If the Federalists in 1789 resembled a hastily gathered army of volunteers, their opponents were mere scattered bands of guerillas. Broken by the successful adoption of the Constitution, they wandered helplessly about, and gave way, with a good deal of spasmodic struggling, before the compact forces and sharp assaults of the Federalists. Their only bond of union had been resistance to the Constitution, and this not only became constantly weaker, but injured them by its very existence, as the popularity of the new system rapidly increased. Strong as they were in numbers, the Democratic party of the future had no better name than anti-Federalists, and no better cry than that of opposition to everything emanating from the government. This loose, incoherent mass was welded together by Hamilton's aggressive, decisive policy. It was

not much to do, but it at least compacted them, so that if the Federalists presented, when the National Bank Act passed, an appearance of which any leader might be proud, they were confronted by much more formidable opponents than when they carried with a sweep the funding of the domestic debt. The anti-Federalists had not only consolidated themselves, but they had concentrated their opposition with extraordinary intensity upon one man. In those early days Hamilton was thought by his opponents to be the embodiment of all power, and as his policy was developed before them he came to be considered the embodiment of all evil as well. His followers at first seemed to have been regarded largely as his creatures, and the dislike of the anti-Federalists extended only very gradually beyond the confines of the Treasury Department. The secretary was once more accused of being "British" in his tastes and sympathies. From England, his enemies declared, he had borrowed everything. Nothing, it was said, was original in the most successful financiering of the time, and he was, according to his opponents, preparing to go even farther, and was making ready to introduce monarchy, aristocracy, and the rest. Then came those hostile tributes to his genius and ability which have never been surpassed by the eulogies of his friends. To

Hamilton were attributed the sudden prosperity and the wild speculation, while he was also held responsible for not stopping the inevitable panic to which speculation gave birth. Every member of the Federalist party was said to be personally inspired by the secretary, and to be under the spell of his magical eloquence and subtle reasoning; he had, as was alleged, bewitched and blinded the unerring judgment of Washington, which had set the seal of its approval on the treasury policy. In attacks like these, of little real weight, but nevertheless calculated as they increased in vehemence and repetition to arouse enmity and impair his influence, and in the drawing together of the opposition, Hamilton found the dark side of his brilliant success as a financier, a statesman, and party leader. Still the attacks were as yet mere mutterings of a possible storm, for the anti-Federalists were after all very weak, with but little ability except what Madison had brought over to them, and were living a precarious life of opposition solely for opposition's sake. They needed a policy, direction and point in their attacks; above all things they needed a leader. They found all three at the right hand of Washington, in Hamilton's own colleague and quondam ally, Thomas Jefferson. The secretary of state had made up his mind. He could no

longer support the administration. He could not govern Hamilton, nor would he be ruled by him, and his own State was wholly against the government. In Hamilton's successful policy there were the germs of an aristocratic republic, there were certainly limitations and possibly dangers to pure democracy; he could not hope to lead or control the Federalists, and therefore nothing remained but to go to the leaderless multitude on the other side and overthrow the party of Washington and his great secretary. This, it is needless to say, was not done in a moment. Jefferson was the last man to make up his mind suddenly to a decisive step and then take it at once. He had no notion of cutting adrift until he saw how the land lay. Still less ready was he to come boldly forward with a programme and put himself at the head of a party. When he had his party all prepared he would do this, but meanwhile he would stay where he was.

It is impossible to fix the exact time when the dissensions in the cabinet, where the new party warfare took its rise, first definitely began. When the flame leaped up before the eyes of men, it was evident that the fire had been burning for some time. We may say, however, in a general way, that the "rift within the lute" began after the assumption of the state debts, and

was greatly widened by the differences among the President's advisers as to the national bank. It was in the winter of 1791–92 that Hamilton became satisfied that Jefferson and Madison were organizing and leading a party against him; but at that time, and for some months to come, he held his peace, and it would have been well if he had continued to do so. The secret work of Jefferson, who began his hostilities against the administration before any one suspected him, and who continued them while clinging to office long after his enmity toward all his associates was notorious, first showed itself in changes in the policy of the opposition. In the first place, they got a name and called themselves Republicans, as distinguished from monarchists, the equivalent of Federalists. The objects of opposition became better defined, and were formulated in such a way as to be taking cries and catchwords. A clear line of attack was marked out, and in short, from being a confused crowd, the anti-Federalists began to assume the form and substance of a compact party. This was the work of Jefferson, silent, subtle, retiring, making no speeches, and printing no essays, but doing a good deal of quiet talking and shrewd letter-writing, toiling in the dark and managing men. In the face of Hamilton's dazzling success, to form an opposition party of

respectable character and good discipline, even with abundant rough material at hand, was a great political feat. Even to make a beginning took time, and the few points just mentioned were the gradual developments of a twelvemonth.

Oddly enough, Jefferson's first blow — which shows him turning to the opposition six months before Hamilton suspected it — was hasty, and unlike himself, because it was publicly given, and fell not upon Hamilton but upon John Adams. That eminent man, finding but little occupation for his restless energy in the vice-presidency, betook himself to writing certain essays entitled "Discourses on Davila." These articles, speculative in character, but well reasoned, and calculated to check the fervor excited by the French Revolution, were very sound and conservative in tone, advocated constitutional government, checks and balances, upper houses, and the like. To Jefferson, entering upon the path of a democratic leader, all this smacked of monarchy and aristocracy, and he forthwith got out an edition of Paine's "Rights of Man" as an antidote to all such pernicious stuff, and prefixed to it a preface in which he hit a sidelong blow at the stout old patriot of Massachusetts. John Quincy Adams replied as "Publicola." Jefferson got the worst of this controversy,

and after his fashion tried to explain it all away. This affair, however, set him to reflecting on the fact, that while the Federalists had in "Fenno's Gazette" an organ devoted to their service, and reaching into every State, the party of the future had nothing of the sort. In the following autumn these meditations bore fruit in the shape of the "National Gazette," edited by Philip Freneau, to whom Jefferson gave the position of translating clerk in the State Department. Thus fortified, Freneau, who was a clever man and a versifier of some little talent, began a succession of bitter, sometimes of sharp and well-directed attacks upon the measures of the administration, and particularly upon Hamilton. Then it was that Hamilton, putting two and two together, came to the very accurate conclusion that Jefferson and Madison were organizing a party against him, and had established a newspaper in their interest as a very necessary part of the plan.

Jefferson, meantime, was at work in other directions. He wrote to Washington more than once, deprecating the treasury measures, and depicting a state of popular discontent, and stirred up others to do the same. At last, on a visit to Virginia during the summer of 1791, Washington heard from the lips of his "quondam friend," Colonel Mason, a long and adverse

criticism upon the policy of the administration. Taking this as an excuse, perhaps Washington condensed all that had been written or said into a brief summary and sent it to Hamilton. Here we find the principles, or more properly the war-cries, of the opposition formulated for the first time with some clearness, and in every line we detect the cunning hand of the secretary of state. Reduced to its simplest terms, this piece of criticism amounts to this: that Hamilton was politically a very bad and dangerous man, who had heaped up a vast debt, which was a sore burden to the people, but which he would not let them pay immediately, notwithstanding their overtaxed condition, but which he had contrived to render permanent; that he fostered speculation, juggled with paper money and the debt in order to influence Congress, where he maintained a corrupt squadron; and that he was laboring secretly to introduce aristocracy and monarchy. Hamilton dealt with this diatribe in a way very characteristic of him when he kept his temper, as he usually did. After a few lines of quiet indignation in his reply to the President, he proceeded to number all the objections made by Mason, and then discussed and answered each of them in his usual cold, forcible, and lucid fashion, just as if he were drawing a report or making a brief, instead of

repelling gross personal attacks. The task was not difficult, for where the accusations were not contradictory they were hopelessly and plainly false, and Washington was entirely satisfied. Indeed, it must be confessed that Jefferson's first declaration of party principles was a pretty poor one. But it was better than anything the party by itself had been able to do: it gave them some valuable catchwords, and concentrated their efforts on the ruin of one man.

Whether this last assault was too much for his endurance, or whether the "National Gazette," now more vituperative than ever, had become unbearable, it is certain that, after replying to the "Objections" sent him by Washington, Hamilton completely lost his temper. He descended into the arena of party strife, and proceeded to answer Freneau, and whip Jefferson over the shoulders of his editor. This was improper and undignified, — the act of an angry man, righteously indignant, no doubt, but not on that account to be excused for taking his high office into the dust of a political newspaper brawl. There was, moreover, no need of it. Federalist politicians and Federalist editors were never either slow or feeble with pen or tongue, and were quite capable of defending their chief and their party. But Hamilton had lost his temper, and a ready pen is a

terrible temptation. Once engaged, he fought well, of course, and it may be admitted that he gained a temporary advantage. It is no excuse to say that all the leading men of the day wrote for the newspapers, and formed public opinion in that way. Hamilton was a member of the cabinet, next to Washington the most conspicuous man in the country, and he had no right and no business to send anonymous communications to the newspapers, savagely attacking one of his colleagues in the administration. He hurt his assailants badly, no doubt; he wrote brilliantly; he gained a temporary victory, but in the eyes of posterity he injured himself and his personal and official dignity. Jefferson, we may be sure, had not planned to draw Hamilton out. He never cared for debate either in the newspapers or by word of mouth. He had no love for a stricken field, and had doubtless believed that circumstances would keep Hamilton silent. He winced terribly when Hamilton rushed at him and publicly denounced him as the supporter of a journal devoted to attacks on the government, whose editor he provided for by public office. He smarted under the lash of a practiced hand, which depicted him as a secret intriguer against the treasury measures, which demolished his charges and laid bare all the operations of the financial policy, with great

consequent credit to its author. For the time being the "National Gazette" was crippled and the secretary of state humiliated; but for this poor reward Hamilton had deeply grieved and troubled the President, who had watched the well-directed shafts go home, and who keenly felt the injury to the government and to the country of such a quarrel, so conducted, and between men occupying such positions. Washington remonstrated with both by letter, and the replies bring the two secretaries into strong contrast. Hamilton's letter was brief, direct, and manly. He said little about his antagonist, avowed his right to defend himself, and promised to do all in his power to keep the peace and hold the administration together. Jefferson's answer was long and tortuous. He defended himself elaborately against Hamilton's published attacks with a kind of wail in his tone which showed that he had been hurt; but he devoted most of his reply to Washington's request for harmony to venomous and bitter abuse of his colleague. As a practical result of all this, Hamilton stopped his attacks, while Jefferson opened fresh trenches in a new direction.

When Congress came together, Hamilton introduced a series of measures looking to the speedy redemption of the debt. One was to

insure the maintenance of the sinking fund, and provide for outstanding certificates; another, to borrow money at a lower rate of interest; and a third, to levy taxes to buy up the six per cents as rapidly as possible. By the strenuous efforts of the opposition, the last two were defeated; the proposition for new taxes, some of which fell upon the planters who were accustomed to raise revenue in the North, being particularly distasteful. Thus it was that the party which denounced the debt, and accused Hamilton of using it corruptly, met his proposal to take all possible reasonable steps for its redemption, and, having done themselves all they could to render it permanent, they yet continued to assail the secretary for that very design.

But all this was the mere disingenuousness of party warfare. The next assault planned by Jefferson and Madison was a much more serious affair. It aimed at the personal ruin of the secretary, and was intended to drive him from the cabinet and prove him guilty of corruption. The attack was headed by Giles, a rough, brazen, loud-voiced Virginian, fit for any bad work, no matter how desperate. First, accounts of one foreign loan were called for, then of all; then, when it appeared that two loans had been consolidated for which there was but doubtful

authority in law, and while Jefferson was insinuating to Washington that Hamilton had used these loans corruptly to aid the bank, there came a string of resolutions calculated to lay bare every operation of the treasury. Jefferson and Madison in this business made the great mistake of not knowing their man before they fell upon him. They probably had little real doubt of Hamilton's integrity, but they thought he would find it difficult to demonstrate it by figures, — they thought that in all these complicated finances there might be errors susceptible of distortion which would cause them to be misconstrued, and, above all, they hoped that Hamilton would be so harassed that he would leave the cabinet. They reckoned without their host. Hamilton was not only a man of spotless integrity in his vast financial transactions, but he was essentially a fighting man. When danger of this sort came upon him, his head became clearer and his nerve greater than before. He was no longer the party leader writing anonymously in "Fenno's Gazette:" he was the great minister, called upon without warning to defend himself, his honor, his office, and his department. Now his genius for organization told in the readiness with which, under his system, everything could be accounted for. Report after report poured in

upon Congress until every operation of the treasury was displayed to the public eye so plainly that he who ran might read. Those who had undertaken this ill-starred business would fain have adjourned and left it all unsettled. But Hamilton was too quick for them, and before the session closed everything had been exposed to the public gaze. The Federalists rejoiced, and eagerly pressed their advantage. Giles introduced resolutions of censure, and the Federalists forced a vote on all of them. Poor Madison, who was preëminently a man of peace, but who had been dragged into this as he was into all his great mistakes by others, had no escape. He was compelled to go on record in favor of the resolutions in a minority so small that it was at once ludicrous and humiliating when contrasted with the grandeur of the preparation and the violence of the abusive declamation which had accompanied the whole proceeding.

We know that the efforts made by Hamilton to accomplish this feat told severely on his health, and the event is one of the most important in his career, because it brought out so strongly the salient features of his mind and character. Hamilton could organize and discipline bodies of men both in war and politics, but he was not a party manager. He could marshal his forces in debate as he marshaled

his arguments; he could lay out a policy and give directions to his lieutenants, but he could not deal with the rank and file. With his party behind him, he could lead; but others must manage the forces. With the same overwhelming impetuosity with which he charged the Yorktown redoubt, he now rushed upon Giles and upon those who moved the wires which made Giles dance. In the dash of the onset we see the vehement energy and strong passionate nature of Hamilton toiling day and night, until the color left his cheeks, that he might compel an issue before Congress adjourned. Yet in all this hot enthusiasm and defiance comes out the clear, cold, penetrating intellect which without an angry word could draw out schedules and balances and accounts, a long array of silent and convincing figures, and nothing else. When at last the conflict was over, and he had routed his opponents and stood flushed with victory, it is no wonder that the party chiefs gathered round him with a zealous devotion. The people saw that Hamilton had triumphed; that he had been right and his enemies wrong; that he had been clean and above reproach. But these long columns of figures did not appeal to the popular imagination, and the masses did not appreciate the magnitude of the battle which had been waged. The leaders in Congress and elsewhere

saw all this, and it was with them that Hamilton stood highest then and always. There was probably no one, however, who appreciated the situation so keenly as Jefferson. The most desperate assault possible had been disastrously repulsed. Hamilton was higher than ever in the public esteem, stronger than ever in the estimation of his party, now rendered more aggressive and active than before. He could not be driven from the cabinet. Direct attacks upon him had clearly failed, and Jefferson made no effort to take up the shivered lance, which he had placed in another hand to use in the open lists. It only remained to stay in the cabinet and there contend with Hamilton for supremacy in guiding the course of the government and winning the confidence and trust of Washington.

CHAPTER VIII

FOREIGN RELATIONS AND THE MAINTENANCE OF THE AUTHORITY OF THE GOVERNMENT

I DO not propose to deal here with the question of the foreign relations of the United States at this period, for the subject is one of the broadest scope, and fit only for a general history in the most comprehensive sense of the term. It was at this time that the foundation of the so-called Monroe doctrine was laid by Washington's proclamation of neutrality, which marked out the true foreign policy of the United States by declaring that this republic of the New World would hold itself aloof from the struggles of Europe. The policy thus laid down was one of the great corner-stones placed by the wisdom of Washington's administration, and upon which the fabric of national greatness was founded. To convert the doctrine of the neutrality proclamation into a guiding and fundamental principle of the state was the work of more than a quarter of a century, and upon our foreign relations during that period the history of the country turned. When they first come into

prominence during Washington's first term, they mark the beginning of an important phase of our development. Between the proclamation of neutrality and the close of the war of 1812, this country adjusted its position among the nations of the earth, settled its foreign relations which then drew the political lines in the United States, and on which the fate of our parties hung, and completed the work of the Revolution by breaking the fetters of political thought as the war had severed the political bonds. In a word, for many years after the neutrality proclamation, the country was engaged in changing its ideas from those of colonies to those of a nation, and in struggling to make itself as independent mentally as it was politically. Into this broad and inviting field it is no part of my purpose to enter. My object is merely to show the place in it which Hamilton occupied, his opinions as to our foreign relations, and the part he took in shaping our foreign policy. Above all, I wish to depict his attitude in regard to the French Revolution, which convulsed the minds of men throughout the civilized world far beyond its own borders, far beyond the regions even where its armies penetrated, and of which it may be truthfully said that Hamilton was one of the most illustrious victims both in his life and in his death.

In March, 1789, our situation in regard to foreign nations was anything but enviable. England, with ill-concealed hatred, held the Western posts, and refused, on account of the unpaid debts of British subjects, to indemnify us for the slaves which had been carried off during the war. She flouted our ministers, refused to send a representative to this country, and strove in every possible way to injure our commerce, of which she had so lately enjoyed a monopoly. Our relations with the mother country were, in short, as strained and mutually offensive as possible. With France, toward whom we felt as a people a sincere gratitude, they were hardly more favorable. Jefferson had failed to obtain from that country any better commercial treatment than was accorded by England. With Spain there was a chronic quarrel, and a dark cloud of war and aggression hung over the valley of the Mississippi. Hamilton felt that the first steps toward placing the United States in the position which they ought to occupy were the restoration of their credit and reputation, and the display of order, strength, and resources which this involved. He rightly believed that success and stability would do more than anything else to compel the respect and consideration of the rest of the world. So far as the various nations were concerned, while

as an individual citizen he was inclined by his feelings toward France, as a statesman he clearly saw that all nations must be treated alike; that, owing to her geographical situation, America had no such things as natural alliances and enmities, but that at the same time on commercial grounds friendly relations with England were vastly more important than with any other nation of the earth. With England, too, the objects at which Hamilton aimed would count for more than anything else. Whatever inconsistencies England may have been guilty of, she has never swerved in civility and respect for success, strength, and wealth, and this Hamilton well knew. But he did not reckon on this alone. In his report on manufactures a cardinal principle was that of retaliation, and the hand he meant thus to force was the hand of England. At the same time he regarded the efforts to discriminate between the various nations, that is, in favor of France and against England, on the ground of gratitude to the one and hatred to the other, as wholly false in principle. Such a course would surely lead to further disagreements with the latter; and the object of the United States was not to indulge in sentiment, but to build up its national greatness and grow rich by its commerce. To treat all nations as they treated us, and to bury the past, which

should not be allowed to hamper the new government, was Hamilton's theory. He had no attachment to England, but rather the contrary. He admired the British constitution as the best system of free government in existence; like all his fellow citizens, he had been nurtured amid the English traditions of law and government, and he had no question that English principles in respect to law and government were, with proper modifications, best suited to the United States. Toward France he felt both affection and gratitude, and in that country were many tried and loved friends and companions in arms. But he wished the new republic to lay aside all sentiment and prejudice as well as all inconvenient memories, and to start fair and free with a view only to her own interests, and a general determination to treat all nations alike if they all behaved equally well; to have no alliances, no friendships, and no enmities, but to cut loose from all complications and aim only at success.

Hamilton's theory as exemplified in the financial policy worked well. Evidences of respect abroad began to multiply. Washington, through Gouverneur Morris, sounded England in regard to the renewal of diplomatic relations, which had been practically severed since the day when John Adams had been driven away from St. James by a stupid insolence which England

has always been fond of displaying toward this country, and which has cost her, first and last, many bitter lessons. The result of Washington's experiment, backed by the rapidly growing prosperity of the country and the increasing stability of the government, was the appointment of a minister to the United States in the person of Mr. George Hammond. This gentleman was empowered to begin negotiations for a commercial treaty, but could conclude nothing. The reëstablishment of commercial relations on a basis something like reciprocity was still distant enough, but nevertheless a good deal had been gained by the mere renewal of diplomatic intercourse. Hammond's negotiations were not very fruitful, but they went on pretty steadily, and Hamilton took a considerable share in them from time to time, more, it must be confessed, than strictly belonged to him as secretary of the treasury. The truth was that Hamilton had a policy for the new government in every direction as well defined as in financial affairs, and he strove to put each and all into effect. He could not rid himself of the idea that he was really the prime minister, a notion encouraged by the way in which Congress had thrown all sorts of questions into his hands for decision. Moreover, his schemes deserved and won the confidence of Washington; and the result was

that Jefferson, entirely innocent of clear-cut, sharply defined plans and policies, and waiting to be guided by events, found himself, much oftener than was pleasant, pushed aside, ridden over, and, as in the case of Hammond, more or less interfered with.

While the United States were thus making their way into the family of nations the French Revolution began, and in a few years the newly launched ship of the young republic was tossing on the waves of the terrible storm which found its centre in Paris. The first news of the great movement in France was received in this country with universal pleasure and delight by men of all shades of political belief. As to the benefits of a free constitution in a country toward which we felt so warmly, all persons—the ultra-Federalist and the radical opponent of the administration alike — were agreed and had a common gratification. But the rapid changes rolled on, and one event succeeded another, each with terrible logic more dreadful than the last, and all hurrying to the worst extremes of violence. When reform became revolution, revolution anarchy, and redress revenge, — when hot-blooded killings in the street changed to cold-blooded massacre and cowardly murder in the prison and the palace, culminating at last in the execution of the king and the daily slaugh-

ter of the guillotine, — then public opinion in America shifted. First the timid and suspicious began to doubt, then the more cautious began to fear, then such men as Washington and Hamilton lost sympathy with a battle for freedom fought in this wise, and the latter rebelled against comparing the French Revolution with our own, saying, "The one is liberty, the other licentiousness." The general enthusiasm with which the French Revolution had been greeted faded away; but while that conflict became distasteful to the mass of the people and an object of suspicion and dislike to the Federalists, the revolutionary fever strongly infected certain elements which predominated among the enemies of the administration. As one side headed by Washington and Hamilton cooled towards France, the other side grew proportionately hotter in admiration and love for the principles of the revolution, just then becoming rather wild and uncertain. This widening rift between two bodies of public opinion was certain before long to breed a party issue. So long as men watched events in Paris and came to one conclusion or another as a matter of abstract theory, no harm was done, but sooner or later these conclusions would be brought to the touchstone of practical decision, and then the parties which had been evoked by the revolution would begin a fierce

conflict. Early in April, 1793, the news arrived that war had been declared between England and France, and that a new minister from the terrible republic had reached Charleston. The decisive moment had come, and Hamilton sent post-haste for Washington, who was at Mount Vernon. When the President reached Philadelphia, he found his two secretaries prepared to meet the crisis, the gravity of which no member of the administration doubted, but prepared to meet it in ways very different and highly characteristic of the two men. Jefferson loved France and the ideas of the revolution, and he hated England; but he also dreaded war and had no desire to have the United States drawn into hostilities. Under these circumstances he was unable to make up his mind as to any definite plan. In order therefore to get, if possible, an expression of public opinion and thereby come to a determination and be rid of responsibility, he proposed to call Congress at once in extra session. It is probable that he saw an opportunity to make party capital by the agitation of this subject in debate, but a summons to Congress was at all events the only suggestion he had to offer to Washington.

Hamilton on the other hand cared for neither England nor France, except so far as he loathed the bloody anarchy of the one and respected the

stability and order of the other. His thoughts were fixed on the United States, unbiased by a sentiment for or against any other nation. For the United States he dreaded war almost as much as Jefferson, but unlike his colleague he had not the slightest doubt as to the position to be taken at that trying moment, and he had fully made up his mind as to the true policy to be adopted. Hamilton had no desire to shift the responsibility of a duty which he conceived to belong to the executive, and which he also thought would be far safer in the hands of Washington than if it were tossed about in a legislative body. He had no wish, therefore, to have Congress called together; but he prepared a series of questions embodying his views, and these he submitted to Washington, who laid them before the cabinet. The policy outlined by these questions was the maintenance of a strong, strict, and genuine neutrality by the United States, to which the utmost publicity should be given, and then a careful consideration of our relations with France, in order that the past might not be so construed as to entangle us with the fortunes and conflicts of the revolution, and in that way drag us from our true position of absolute neutrality and consequent peace. The first question, as to issuing a declaration of neutrality, was carried in the

affirmative, and the proclamation to that effect soon appeared. This was really the central point of the whole policy of Washington and Hamilton, and was one of the great landmarks established by the Federalists for the guidance of the republic. There is no stronger example of the influence of the Federalists under the lead of Washington upon the history of the country than this famous proclamation, and in no one respect did the personality of Hamilton impress itself more directly on the future of the United States. So little was it understood at the time that when thirty years later the same principle, in an extended form, was enunciated by Mr. Monroe's administration, it was hailed as a new doctrine, and incorporated as a leading article in the political creed of the United States. When adopted and put forth by Washington, this truism of to-day was hardly appreciated. The colonial spirit, which was the spirit of the past, made it seem impossible that the United States should be wholly apart from the affairs of Europe. The Federalists acted on the principle thus laid down while they held power, maintaining a bold and strong neutrality, and ready to strike the first nation, no matter which it was, that dared infringe it. After the fall of the Federalists this doctrine slipped out of sight. For a vigorous neutrality, ever on the

alert and ready for war, was substituted a timid, exasperating policy of peace protected by commercial warfare. Ten years of bitter political conflict, including three years of foreign war, was the result, and by this harsh process the colonial spirit was finally exorcised. Then the national foreign policy, formulated, devised, and adopted by Washington and Hamilton, was popularly accepted under the administration of Monroe.

The primary question of neutrality was settled by the proclamation. It then became necessary to fix the character of this neutrality by a careful determination of our attitude towards the most aggressive, active, and dangerous of the belligerents, — the French republic. The second point therefore came on the reception of the minister of France, which was settled in the affirmative. Then followed a series of perplexing questions as to receiving the minister with or without qualifications, and as to our relations to France under existing treaties. Up to this point the cabinet had succeeded in reaching an agreement, but now they diverged widely. Hamilton wished it distinctly understood that by receiving the French minister the United States did not admit that the treaties were now binding in their full extent. These treaties provided, of course, for the payment of our debt to

France, and also for the guarantee of the French possessions on this continent, and for a defensive alliance. Hamilton, who at the outset had done his best to expedite payments to the new government, had more recently begun to hold back. He now said that while there was no doubt of the general rule of international law, that for treaty purposes the existing government was to a foreign nation the same as any predecessor, yet this rule, like all others, required reasonable construction. The change of government in France, he added, was of such a nature as to alter every circumstance under which and for which the treaties had been made, and therefore the United States had the right to renounce them. Moreover, everything was so uncertain and shifting in France that to live up to the treaties with the present government might in a few months amount to a cause of war with its successor. Again, the war was not defensive, and so Hamilton concluded that all this should be plainly stated to the minister, so that he might understand that we did not intend to be bound by the treaties. Hamilton's construction was, at least, that of the French Convention, which had just annulled a clause in one of the treaties, but it was also the sound and statesmanlike view. His arguments go to great length, and are clear and acute, as usual, but the central

idea was as simple as it was wise. The French treaties were legacies of the past. They were colonial in spirit and in fact. The opportunity had now come to be rid of them legally and fairly. Hamilton's entire policy was to take immediate advantage of the opportunity, cut loose from these entangling bonds, and thus assume in foreign affairs a wholly free and thoroughly national position. Jefferson, on the other hand, was for a rigid construction of the law of nations and for the maintenance of the same close connection with the republic as with the monarchy, always barring actual war.

These contending views, however, and a decision upon them, were soon pushed aside by the appearance in person of Genet, the minister himself, who raised a series of difficult and exasperating questions of the most practical kind so quickly that there was no time to consider general policies. The administration found enough to do in checking Genet's mischief without coming to any conclusion as to the qualifications with which he should be received, or as to the statements which should be made to him with reference to the attitude of the United States in regard to the treaties. The policy of the United States toward France was, indeed, settled during these contests with her representative, and ultimately according to Hamilton's

doctrines, but it was done bit by bit, in sore vexation of spirit, and not broadly, comprehensively, and quietly.

Indeed, from the time when Genet came upon the scene, a settlement in the latter fashion was out of the question. The new minister was an excitable, light-headed Frenchman, maddened by the wild ideas of Paris. He rushed from one excess to another from the day of his arrival until that on which his successor appeared, and he endeavored to raise about him a party to overthrow the administration. His first act was to fit out privateers at Charleston, and thence proceed with a sort of triumphal procession northward to Philadelphia. Difficulties now gathered thickly about the cabinet. The fitting out of privateers and the capture of prizes by these privateers, as well as the seizure of British vessels within our waters, all leading to expostulation and demands for redress on the part of the English minister, confronted the administration in a constant succession of cases. Hamilton, whose policy was not neutrality with a covert leaning to one side, but a genuine neutrality treating all alike, took strong ground in favor of at once giving up the prize made by a French ship of war within our waters. He also urged the immediate stoppage, by all the force of the government, of the enlistment of sea-

men and fitting out of privateers by the French in our ports, and the surrender of all prizes of such privateers, or, if restoration was impossible, then compensation on our part to the owners wherever we had failed in our duty as a neutral. The first point prevailed at once. The third was resisted by Jefferson as too much in favor of England, and as amounting to reprisal. For a time decision on this point was suspended, but ultimately Hamilton's view received the sanction of Washington. On the fitting out of privateers a long struggle ensued between the French minister and the administration. Here a privateer would be stopped, and there one would escape. Americans were arrested and tried for infractions of neutrality by enlisting on the French privateers; and at last French consuls, who were undertaking to govern in this country as their fellows did in the states of Europe bordering on the terrible republic, were deposed from office and deprived of the right to exercise their functions. This fitting out of privateers finally culminated in the case of the Little Sarah, sent forth from Philadelphia in flagrant contempt of the government, and beneath the very eyes of the cabinet. Hamilton and Knox urged strongly and characteristically the duty of placing a battery on one of the islands, and of firing upon the

privateer if she attempted to escape. Thanks to Jefferson, however, who believed, or pretended to believe, that Genet had promised not to let the vessel go, and who was in a tremor at the idea of joining in "the combination of kings" and getting into war with France, Hamilton's plan was not carried out, the militia were withdrawn, and Genet sent the privateer at once to sea. Washington came back in a state of indignation, and Jefferson found himself so thoroughly uncomfortable that he now seriously thought of resignation.

In other quarters Genet was equally active. He made a continuous effort to get all the money due to France. He anticipated payments so far as he could and then asked for more, and almost insisted that he should receive the whole amount either in money or provisions. But in the domain of the treasury Hamilton was master and unrestrained. Genet's loud demands passed idly by. The secretary paid him what was due, allowed him a reasonable anticipation, and could not be moved to do more. When the Frenchman threatened to give notes on the United States for what he wanted, in order to fit out privateers and illegal armaments in the Southwest against Spain, Hamilton gave him to understand that he might draw if he so pleased, but that his drafts would not be honored. It is

refreshing, amid the bewildering complications of that confused time, to see the vain beating of the Frenchman at the doors of the treasury, and the perfect success of Hamilton's cool, unalterable attitude.

Genet, however, made even more trouble for the administration in our own politics than he did in the management of foreign relations. The sober and intelligent opinion of the country had turned away in disgust from the excesses of the French Revolution, but this opinion was silent and observant, and as yet inactive. On the other hand, the thoughtless and careless, the rabble in the larger cities, the foreign refugees from England and Ireland, and the more violent elements of the opposition were infected by the excitement of the French. In contemplating the objects of the movement in Europe, they overlooked the terrible means employed, and allowed their reason to be confused by the extravagant jargon of the new republic. The noise and enthusiasm were therefore with Genet. Banquets and processions, red caps and democratic societies, and the ravings of Freneau and Bache in their newspapers, all brought the half-crazed Frenchman to believe that the people were with him, and that through them he could force the government to do his pleasure. This agitation became so violent that Hamilton felt

it to be necessary to evoke and give a lead to the opposite sentiment; and in the summer of 1793 he published a series of essays, signed "Pacificus," defending the proclamation and the policy of the administration. These papers, written in Hamilton's clear, convincing fashion, served their purpose of awakening the better part of the community to the gravity of the situation, and began the work of rallying the friends of the government to its active support. Calmly but steadily the administration persisted in carrying out its policy, despite every obstacle, foreign or domestic, and in the neutrality rules of August they laid down the principles of Washington and Hamilton as those by which they meant to stand, and by which the country should be guided in its foreign relations.

Genet's language and the tone of his letters increased continually in violence, and became at last so intolerable that the cabinet agreed to send his correspondence to Paris and ask for his recall. It was also resolved to furnish him with copies of this correspondence and of the demand for recall. Jefferson, whose private intercourse with Genet had been very different from his official attitude, warmly opposed this disclosure, fearing that it would lead to an outbreak. Hamilton, on the contrary, with all his fighting qualities now thoroughly aroused,

wanted to go much farther. He wished in the first place that the recall should be made in sharp and peremptory terms. He advocated, also, the immediate publication of all the correspondence, and a direct appeal to the people. To this proposition Washington inclined, but Jefferson succeeded in defeating it. Genet, however, soon made the appeal himself, by publishing a letter which raised a direct issue between the President and himself. The tide of public sentiment now turned strongly. The ruling elements in the community came forward, the administration found itself supported, the armaments in the West were checked, and the French consuls brought to terms or deposed. Again Hamilton and Washington wished to go farther and suspend Genet from the exercise of his functions, and again Jefferson checked and prevented decisive action. The result was that Genet went on for a few months longer insulting our government, and doing a good work in stimulating the public resentment against France, but his power for mischief ended when he appealed to the people against Washington.

Hamilton's course in all these complications is highly characteristic. After carefully watching events in Europe, he advocated, when war was declared, a sharply defined and strict neutrality, and then a firm but cautious severance

of all the entangling bonds which held us to France. But when Genet appeared with insults and aggressions, instead of negotiations and discussions, Hamilton, while still urging the rigid enforcement of a genuine neutrality, wished to lay aside diplomacy with the French minister, and rebuke him openly and severely. He had, moreover, no desire for the assistance of Congress, but preferred to have the Executive deal with the whole matter and meet every complication as it arose. Jefferson acted simply as a drag on the policy of his colleague, which, nevertheless, finally prevailed at every point; and it is perhaps in some degree due to the opposition of the secretary of state that the administration came through all these trials so successfully. Washington sympathized with Hamilton's views and ultimately gave his approval to them all. When Washington was angry, — as he was on one or two occasions in this eventful summer, — he was to the full as combative as Hamilton. It is very conceivable that there were moments when they might have moved too fast and struck too hard, if it had not been for the persevering resistance of Jefferson. But, however this may have been, the policy of a strong and impartial neutrality triumphed and was put in practice. At every step the two secretaries went farther apart, the one pushing on the successful policy,

the other holding back, clinging to the French treaties, and professing that everything, neutrality and all, depended on the sanction of Congress. The summoning of that body was another point on which Jefferson had suffered defeat, and all this, joined to the false position in which he was placed, by holding one language officially, and another privately to Genet, by taking one attitude with his party friends and another in the cabinet, led to his resignation, which he with reluctance deferred until the assembling of Congress.

When that body came together, the wisdom of not calling it before was plainly manifest. Genet had succeeded in one thing. He had created a party issue, and had given a definite object to the motley masses of the opposition. The financial policy dropped out of sight, and the now united opponents of the administration fell with a swoop upon our foreign relations. Everything conspired to help them. While our government was trying to preserve neutrality and keep the country out of the current of the French Revolution, Great Britain had begun that course of arrogant, aggressive interference with our commerce which was perhaps the stupidest blunder she made in her protracted struggle with France, and which continued until it produced war in 1812. This conduct gave

the opposition precisely the handle they wanted. Then, too, Jefferson was enabled, just before he left office, to map out the course to be pursued by sending in to Congress all his correspondence with Genet and Hammond, and a report on our commerce which indicated that policy of commercial warfare destined in later years to become such a curse to the country. Hamilton, who appreciated the party purposes to be gained by this, opposed the transmission of the Hammond correspondence; but Washington, who always rose above party, rightly decided that everything must go in.

In his dealings with Genet, Jefferson had been under the supervision of the cabinet, and his work was therefore spirited and strong, while with Hammond he needed no incentive to take a bold attitude. The correspondence therefore, as a whole, was vigorous in tone, and having all the ability for which Jefferson was conspicuous in letter-writing, deserves a high rank among our state papers. Invigorated by their leader's success, the opposition at once took up the line he had marked out in his commercial report, — which was by no means a very able document, — and Madison introduced resolutions to establish duties against nations not in treaty with us. Hamilton knew that the more eminent leaders on his side would meet this question in their

own way, but this did not content him. He could not reply to Madison personally, but he determined to do it through the mouth of another. He therefore equipped his friend, Mr. Smith of South Carolina, with a speech, and in this way met Madison at the outset of the undertaking. Smith's reply, thus provided, was strong and effective. The secretary lifted the question at once out of the confusion of foreign politics, and placed it on purely commercial grounds, arguing against the resolution on his constant principles that in trade this country should know neither friend nor enemy, but be governed wholly by its interests. The argument was unanswerable, but the House passed the resolution against which it was directed. To the second resolution Nicholas offered an amendment, naming England as the object of the hostile discrimination; but his own party was not ripe for this step, and the whole matter was postponed. Then came a fresh and worse aggression on the part of England in the form of an order in council to seize all vessels loaded with French produce. As ready to resent attack from one quarter as from another, Hamilton declared this order an outrage, and urged the fortification of the seaports and the immediate raising of troops. The Federalists in the House, adhering like their leaders to the doc-

trines laid down by Washington, sprang forward with strong measures for an army, a navy, and an embargo, in order to prepare the country for war, which seemed indeed close at hand. The opposition, always prodigal heretofore of brave words, now held back, and stoutly resisted practical fighting measures, opposing particularly the bill to establish a navy, which subsequently became law. They were ready enough for party purposes to declaim against England, to talk war and yet keep the peace. They were quite prepared to sequestrate debts, — a piece of swindling denounced by Hamilton, — and be as offensive as possible to England, but they were not half so ready to fight with their kinsmen as were the "British" Federalists. It was plain that the country was drifting rapidly into war, which Washington saw clearly would be most perilous to the fortunes of the young nation. Hamilton's idea of a special mission to England met, therefore, with the warm approval of Washington, who at once turned to his secretary of the treasury as the fittest man for this delicate and important task, an opinion in which he was fully sustained by the Federalist leaders. But the Virginia party, headed by Madison and Monroe, greatly alarmed at the prospect of this appointment, made an active and bitter resistance. Washington, anxious above all things for

the success of the mission, and in order to prevent the country from being torn with faction in the face of these foreign troubles, gave up his first choice and sent Jay, at the urgent recommendation of Hamilton himself. The opposition in the Senate was bitter, but the nomination was confirmed; and Jay's instructions, drawn in outline by Hamilton, were toned down and then adopted by the cabinet. There are few acts in our history which show greater force, courage, and address than were displayed by Washington and Hamilton in carrying through this appointment despite every obstacle and the most determined opposition which, even while it acquiesced in the selection of the envoy, sought by every means to hamper him and precipitate war. Under the circumstances it must be admitted that Washington was judicious. Yet Hamilton would undoubtedly have made a better treaty, and one more satisfactory to the country than that obtained by Jay. With all the senseless clamor about his British sympathies, Hamilton would have aimed to get as much as possible from England by taking a high tone in the negotiation. This was shown by his draft of instructions, which were modified by the cabinet, in the direction of greater concessions to the English demands. He appreciated as entirely as any one the necessity of peace,

and had plenty of tact and address, but he was far firmer, bolder, and more audacious than Jay, and these were the very qualities which were needed. The Jeffersonians were justly alarmed. If Hamilton made a successful treaty he would be stronger and more popular than ever, and it would all redound to the credit of his party and to his own dreaded influence. If, on the other hand, he should make a treaty which conceded much to England, he would probably force it through the Senate, and we should then be closer to England and farther than ever from France. With these views the outcry against Hamilton was started. It may well be doubted whether by the most virulent resistance the opposition could have done much harm, but it was possible that they might, and therefore Washington prudently decided as he did. At all events, the appointment of Jay, a more conciliatory policy on the part of England, and the appearance of Fauchet to take Genet's place, brought an interval of calm in our foreign difficulties, and permitted the administration to congratulate itself on the skill with which it had steered through the perils and complications of the past six months.

We have already seen the tendency of Hamilton in mind and temperament to distrust a pure democracy, and to have faith only in a

strong government and in the influence and power of the upper classes, even if those classes did not find, as he thought they should, direct recognition in the Constitution. This tendency was turned into settled conviction as a matter of general principle by the spectacle presented to his observation in Paris. When the matter, however, was brought directly home to him by Genet, by the popular support of France, and by the wild talk of the opposition press and speakers, Hamilton passed rapidly from the general to the particular, and began to believe not only that pure democracy was abstractly perilous, but that there were in this country, as in France, elements which considered democracy and anarchy as convertible terms, and were bent on producing the latter.

In what he called the "political putrefaction" of Pennsylvania, and in the disturbances of the western region of that State, Hamilton found, as he thought, a practical manifestation of the justice of his views as to the dangerous elements in our population. At last, too, the time had come when a pacific policy towards the malcontents was plainly impossible, and Hamilton was allowed to deal with what he deemed the elements of anarchy as he thought they should be dealt with, for it is unnecessary to say that Hamilton, for this contingency also, had a policy,

obvious and simple enough, it may be admitted, but still well-defined and thorough in details. The trouble had, in truth, been for some years coming to a head. The only serious criticism of Hamilton's financial policy is that it was too strong, that it strained the new fabric too severely, and this criticism always seeks proof in the excise law, which had been rendered necessary by the assumption of the state debts. Apart from the unanswerable economic arguments in favor of taxing spirits, Hamilton believed that unless the government could enact and enforce such a proper law the system of the Constitution was really worthless. The need of revenue carried the Excise Bill through Congress, in 1791, despite much bitter opposition. Its passage was the signal for the immediate display of a lawless and riotous temper in western Pennsylvania, where the manufacture of whiskey was chiefly carried on, and thence it spread rapidly through the similar regions of Virginia and North Carolina. At the next session, amendments perfected and modified the obnoxious law, while Hamilton devised every method to render its execution as easy as possible.

Still the disorders went on, until in the summer of 1792 they reached such a point that Hamilton, tired of the dilatory and ineffective

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processes of law, thought the moment had come for the direct and decisive application of force. Washington, however, was not ready for extreme measures, and so Hamilton drafted a proclamation, which Washington sent to Jefferson, who countersigned it, declaring privately that he wholly disapproved it. The proclamation and Washington's journey through the South had a good effect, and the disorder subsided in Virginia and North Carolina. But in Pennsylvania the state of affairs continued to grow steadily worse, and the opposition to Hamilton's vigorous attempts to enforce the law grew more violent. Finally, Congress gave the executive additional powers, which were sorely needed, but their exercise was the signal for armed resistance to the officers of the United States. From gross and brutal outrages upon property and persons, the insurgents passed to open defiance of the law. The United States mail was stopped, large bodies of armed men gathered, and the speeches and publications of the leaders proclaimed the overthrow of the government. The emergency had come and Washington met it, as he did every crisis, calmly, firmly, and successfully. Hamilton was at his side, ready with every detail. He had carefully and characteristically estimated the number of men capable of bearing arms in the

insurgent counties, and knew precisely how many troops would be needed. The States responded to the call of the President, and with fifteen thousand men the administration faced the incipient rebellion.

Hamilton, after his own energetic fashion, wanted to serve as an officer, but finding this impracticable accompanied Washington and the army, and later went on without the President in general superintendence of the operations. It was his policy, and he was determined to carry it through even at the point of the bayonet, if the ordinary machinery of the law proved powerless. An attempt at negotiation was made by the frightened and more cautious among the leaders of the insurrection. The government readily gave them this last chance, but the conference came to nothing, and the army moved forward and spread through the disaffected region. Then the insurrection faded helplessly and bloodlessly away. It disappeared not only completely, but ridiculously and with humiliation to the vanquished. Gradually the disaffected came in and submitted, and were treated with the leniency which is so strong a trait in the American character. Hamilton himself showed a forbearance not a little remarkable in a man of his bold and imperious nature. But he was too wise to seek punish-

ment or revenge. He had triumphed. His policy was vindicated. It had not been too strong for the government, but had shown, on the contrary, the force and vitality of the new system. The power put forth had been simply overwhelming, and insurrection had been crushed without leaving any memory of bloodshed to rankle in the hearts of the people. The financial policy had in truth converted the system of the Constitution into a living, vigorous organism, and the unshrinking exercise of force by the administration, which was wholly due to Washington and Hamilton, brought to the government new strength, vigor, and respect. The suppression of the "whiskey rebellion" had shown the government to be capable of maintaining itself against armed resistance. The lesson of Shays rebellion had not been wasted, and the contrast thus afforded between the government of the confederacy and that of the Constitution was the crown of the masterly domestic policy which had been begun by the first report on the public credit.

When Congress came together the victory of the administration was apparent in the enfeebled action of the opposition, and the Federalists were not slow to take advantage of it. Among Genet's legacies, and by far the most objectionable, were the Democratic societies,

so called, modeled on the famous "clubs" of Paris. They were worthless, noisy assemblages, given to useless agitation. Hamilton, perhaps, saw in them the same capabilities for mischief, the same anarchical tendencies, as in their Parisian prototypes, but both he and Washington and the Federalists generally considered them dangerous, obnoxious, and by their clamorous folly largely responsible for the outbreaks in Pennsylvania. Washington, therefore, strongly sustained by Hamilton, smote them with all the force of his rarely used personal influence and popularity. He denounced them in his message; the Senate supported him, and after a heated debate in the House the opposition, despite their majority, were unable to protect their beloved associations. The blow, sharply struck and well calculated in point of time, was decisive. The societies withered away, and Genet's work was at an end. This closed the first chapter in the history of the struggles growing out of the French Revolution. The administration had come through this period of trial with perfect success. Neutrality had been established and maintained, the wild sympathy with France had been checked and discredited, domestic insurrection had been put down, and nationality had been advanced and strengthened beyond all former expectations.

At the session of Congress in the previous year, when the opposition were throwing themselves upon our foreign relations, delighted to abandon the financial questions where they had suffered such defeat, Hamilton, with the fixed purpose that the attacks upon his character should not rest where they were, demanded further investigation. The most searching scrutiny was of no avail, and the opposition were more than ever disgusted with their mistake. After the lapse of another year Hamilton put the finishing touch to the funding system by a comprehensive scheme for the redemption of the entire debt. While this measure was on its passage, and after the galling results to the opposition of their investigation were well known, he laid down his office and retired from public life. He had been for some time contemplating this step, which had become imperative on account of his private affairs, and of the absolute need of an increased income to provide for his large family. He had been in office for nearly six years, and his work was done, his opinions and his personality were indelibly impressed upon our frame of government and upon our political development. We look in vain for a man who, in an equal space of time, has produced such direct and lasting effects upon our institutions and history.

CHAPTER IX

THE JAY TREATY AND THE ADAMS ADMINISTRATION

If anything could have kept Hamilton in the cabinet it would have been a knowledge of the crisis which was to arise upon the reception of the Jay treaty. He was, of course, well aware of the fierce opposition excited by the creation of the mission; he knew of the public meetings, of the ravings of extreme Democrats, both in the newspapers and on the platform, and of the burnings in effigy of the excellent and eminent ambassador. But he regarded all these things as temporary ebullitions, which, as he foresaw, died away into quiet while Jay was carrying on his negotiations with Lord Grenville. Hamilton perceived, too, that, apart from the outward manifestations, there was a profound interest in the result of Jay's mission, and that there would be a party conflict over its ratification. At the same time he certainly did not anticipate that such a shock would be produced as that which actually occurred when the contents of the treaty became known. But then Hamilton

did not expect such a result from the special mission. Rumor, speaking to us in the person of Jefferson, says that Hamilton called it an "old woman's treaty" when he first read it. To his penetrating mind and bold, dashing temperament, it may well have seemed that such an epithet was just. The treaty was certainly not such a one as he himself would have made. But he was called upon to deal with it as it stood, and on the broad ground of whether it should be accepted with all its defects, or rejected in favor of almost certain war.

The treaty went to the Senate, was ratified there, except the highly objectionable prohibitory clause in the twelfth article, and then went back to the President for final decision. Through the closed doors of the Senate the treaty slipped out, and was soon public property. When it became known, there was an outburst of popular indignation which has hardly ever been equaled in the history of the country. The wrath excited was partly justifiable, for some of the stipulations were far from what had been reasonably expected, and the fire was assiduously fanned by the partisans of France. The people judged hastily, and, in large measure, without reflection. The tempest swept through the country, accompanied with violent denunciation, insults to the British flag,

rioting, burning in effigy, and every species of wild disorder; even the sturdy Federalist States of New England were swept from their moorings, and joined in the general outcry.

In the midst of all the hurly-burly stood Washington, calm, watchful, unterrified, making up his mind silently, and with "truth only for his guide." Here and there a few of the coolest and wisest among the Federalists saw the necessity of ratification and of standing by the President, and with their accustomed boldness and ability they faced the apparently hopeless odds arrayed against them. Foremost among them was Hamilton, ever present where the fray was thickest, and always first to come forward when a fight, especially if it was a desperate one, was in progress. He appeared at a great public meeting in New York to endeavor to check the raging opposition by fair discussion. Debate then and there was out of the question. Persuasive eloquence had for the moment lost its charm, and when Hamilton began to speak he was howled down and assailed with a volley of stones, one of which struck him on the forehead. With perfect coolness he said, "If you use such striking arguments, I must retire," and withdrew from a contest which at the moment was hopeless. But he retreated only to enter another field. Four

days after he had been stoned appeared the first number of the series of essays signed "Camillus," in defense of the treaty, in favor of the neutrality and peace policy, and in support of the administration.

These essays continued to appear for a year, and until the weight of public opinion was once more on the side of their author. "Camillus" was singularly effective, and the best proof of his power came from his adversaries. Jefferson was particularly disturbed. He felt very keenly the truth of Burr's remark, that any one who put himself on paper with Hamilton was lost. At the same time he was willing and even anxious that some one else should run the risk of wreck in a conflict with "the Colossus of the Federalists," and he therefore urged the unattractive duty upon Madison. That gentleman, however, had as little stomach for the fight as his chief, and prudently held back. Others less able and less wary than their leaders entered the field with replies of various merit and various classical signatures, and were beaten and driven off. Whatever may be said of Hamilton in other respects, in political controversy, in the art of moulding, creating, and controlling public opinion by discussion and debate in the newspapers, he stood absolutely without a rival. Ready, persuasive, transparent

in reasoning, and formidable in retort, he never failed, when he took up his pen, to create a profound impression or to sway the minds of thinking men, and he never, except in the "Federalist," worked under greater difficulties nor with greater success than when he entered the lists as "Camillus."

But when Hamilton first began to write the clouds had gathered thick and black; it seemed as if the popular rage would infallibly lead to war, and, in order to make the position of the President still more difficult, England, with her customary stupidity, seized that moment to renew the obnoxious provision order. This gave pain even to those most anxious for peace. To Hamilton it seemed intolerable; to Washington hardly to be endured. Outraged by the nation with which he was seeking to make peace, with his own party demoralized and hushed, and with the opposition in full cry urging on the popular clamor, the President faced the great question. With that high, serene, silent courage which he always showed, whether in the shock of unsuccessful battle or in the din of hostile politics, Washington deliberated. He would do his duty, — that was a matter of course. As to what that duty was, he felt but little doubt. But with the almost painful sense of justice and responsibility which always

characterized him, Washington wished to know all sides. He consulted but few persons, and among those few Hamilton was first, as much so as if he had never left the cabinet. Hamilton on his side responded as fully and zealously as if he were still the President's secretary. He inclined to an attempt for further negotiation, and advised a refusal to exchange ratifications unless the provision order should be rescinded. On the general principle that the treaty, which meant peace on honorable if not on advantageous terms, was better than war, he sympathized with Washington. At Washington's request he drew up a summary of the arguments on both sides with that clearness in appreciating all points in a case which made him such a valued adviser to a man summoned to give a grave decision. He was disposed, on the whole, to be rather more aggressive and less sacrificing than Washington, as was natural to his temperament, but when the President finally acted, ratified the treaty, and sent it to England with a sharp remonstrance against the provision order, Hamilton fully sustained him. In all the struggle which followed in repelling attacks on the administration, and during the fierce contest over the treaty in the House, he played the same leading part. He was the trusted counselor of Washington, the adviser of the party leaders,

and the man to whom all the most active Federalists turned for suggestions, for arguments, and for unfailing aid by tongue and pen, in letters and through the press.

While Hamilton was occupying this important and influential position in the party and before the country, the presidential election came on. Washington had withdrawn from the field, and the serious problem of selecting a candidate for the succession confronted the Federalists. They faced this question for the first time, and on the result, as after events showed, the fate of the party largely depended. There were four men from whom the choice, as it seemed at the time, must be made, — Hamilton, Adams, Jay, and Thomas Pinckney of South Carolina. Hamilton was the head of the Federalists, but he was the leader of the leaders rather than of the party. He never had a strong hold on the people, or on the rank and file even of his own party. Moreover, he was the man most hated and feared by the opposition. He was the incarnation of the whole Federalist policy from the foundation of the government, and as a candidate he would have aroused enmities too fierce to have permitted his election. This was plainly seen, and by no one more plainly than by Hamilton himself, for there is no evidence that he ever gave the idea of securing the

Federalist nomination for the Presidency serious consideration, or was influenced by it for a moment. Jay's name was so closely associated with the conflict of the treaty as to put him, too, out of the lists. Pinckney was well known and popular, especially on account of the brilliant success of his treaty with Spain, but he was a new man and a Southerner, and the Federalist strongholds were in the North. There remained John Adams, who was, with the exception of Hamilton, the most conspicuous man in the party, and he had had a long and distinguished career. He contended with Hamilton, also, for the perilous honor of being the chief mark for the concentrated dislike of the opposition. But he was, on the other hand, still revered for eminent services in the Revolution, his name still awakened the memories of the great conflict for independence, and he had in this way a hold upon the body of the party and upon the popular imagination. Moreover, he was a Northern man and in the line of promotion.

It was therefore determined by the party leaders to vote for Adams and Pinckney for the first and second offices respectively; a wise conclusion, which made what would, in the language of to-day, be called a "strong ticket." Unfortunately the Constitution did not then admit of a "ticket." The person receiving the highest

number of votes was President, the next highest Vice-President. This opened the door to an infinite amount of management and intrigue in the electoral colleges. The Federalists were well aware that their chance of success was narrow, and that no votes could be spared. Hamilton's views were simple enough. He wished first to hold the administration in the party, and then to win the second place for a Federalist and exclude Jefferson. To do this he urged upon all his friends the policy of voting strictly for both Adams and Pinckney, and of throwing no votes away. In so doing he was right, clearly and beyond all question, and the departure from this policy elected Jefferson to the second place. By its adoption two contingencies were possible: either Adams and Pinckney would receive an equal number of votes, which would throw the decision into the House of Representatives, and probably give the election to Adams; or — and this was the hypothesis fatal to the scheme — the South would throw away their votes for Adams and make Pinckney President. To this latter contingency Hamilton was indifferent. Indeed, it is pretty clear that he preferred Pinckney, because he felt that he would then continue to be the controlling influence with the administration, while his observation had led him to suspect that the reverse would prob-

ably be the case under Adams. In letting his preference for Pinckney, or rather his indifference of choice as between Pinckney and Adams, be known, Hamilton made a mistake. As the principal leader of the party he was bound to sink personal preferences and support the choice of the party for the first place without any reservation, and he should have put the plan of voting equally for both candidates solely on the ground of party success, treating the possible election of Pinckney as a thing never to be considered, much less viewed with indifference. How far Hamilton's position injured his own policy of voting it would now be difficult to say. The plan was doomed to defeat, because South Carolina would not vote for a Northern man, a fact of which New England, unluckily, was well aware. The result was that both sections threw away votes, electing Adams by a bare plurality of three, and defeating Pinckney, bringing about exactly the mischief Hamilton had striven so earnestly to prevent, the choice of Jefferson as Vice-President.

When Adams was inaugurated the situation was both novel and difficult. Adams, unlike Washington, was elected by a party and strictly as a party man. He was, by virtue of his office, head of the party *de jure*. But despite the President's hold upon the people, Hamilton, owing

to his brilliant services and his predominant influence with almost all the party leaders, was the head of the Federalists *de facto*. On the relations existing between these two men, therefore, the welfare of the party largely depended. Both Adams and Hamilton were honestly anxious for the success of their party, for the well-being and advancement of their country, and for the maintenance of the cardinal principles of Washington's administration. Unfortunately they entered upon this new and trying period in the career of their party with feelings of coolness, if not of mutual distrust. Hamilton had taken votes from Adams at the first election to make sure that the selection of Washington for the first place should not be endangered. In the years which followed, Adams gave a sturdy and often decisive support to the treasury measures and to the general policy of the administration, so that at the second election he received Hamilton's hearty support for the vice-presidency, and their relations were then cordial. In the third election Adams was aware of Hamilton's policy of equal voting, which he hastily attributed to nothing but the latter's preference for Pinckney. This revived the memory of the first election, and Adams quickly set down the whole thing as one long-continued and jealous intrigue. Hamilton had erred at the first elec-

tion by taking doubtful action for which there was no occasion. His policy at the last was wise and right, but he made the mistake of not burying his personal preferences and keeping them out of sight.

When Adams came to the head of the government he regarded Hamilton as guilty of the almost unpardonable sin of want of respect toward himself, as prone to intrigue, grasping, dictatorial, and of great power in the party. Hamilton, on his side, thought Adams unreasonable, unmanageable, at times wrong-headed, in short unsafe; and he had unfortunately been at very little pains in the recent past to conceal these opinions. Hamilton had gone out of office in good faith and he had no desire to regain it, but he had a profound interest in the fate of the Federalist policy which had made the Union, and which was so largely the work of his own hands. He, therefore, was anxious to retain his influence with the administration and his power in the party. His position entitled him to confidence and consultation, and he was by no means a difficult counselor, nor anxious to absorb all credit to himself. If the work was well done, Hamilton cared little who did it. When on one or two occasions he grasped at the ensigns of command, it was because he honestly believed that he was the only man fit to bear

their weight. He was a severe and penetrating critic, but neither jealous nor captious. It was perfectly easy to manage Hamilton and win his cordial support. Washington had never found the slightest difficulty in dealing with him in or out of office. All that was required was tact, full and frank consultation, and the deference to which his opinions were on every ground entitled.

Tact in managing men, however, was conspicuous in John Adams chiefly by its absence. Fear did not enter into his composition, and he was sure to do what he believed to be right at all hazards, but he could not be right gracefully and with address. Every dictate of prudence and of party obligation bound him to consult Hamilton, and yet he undertook to ignore him first and crush him afterwards. Hamilton, on his part, when he found that the President was prejudiced against him, and bolted wildly at the thought of being influenced by him, should have supported the administration when he could, and, if his advice openly offered was neglected, should have remained passive so long as he could consistently remain in the party. This would have been not only wise, but dignified and in keeping with his position, and it would not have concealed his opinions or diminished their due weight with the party at large. Unfortunately such a course required very great

self-control, which was difficult to Hamilton's imperious and energetic nature. Instead of either leaving Mr. Adams alone or openly resisting him in the party, he undertook to force the President's hand, through his power over the cabinet and the leaders in Congress. The result of such relations between these two chiefs was certain to cause an open breach as soon as they differed in policy, and equally sure to produce disaster to the party.

Washington had settled the English question. Danger in that quarter was removed, and the means employed to effect the removal were one fruitful cause of peril in another direction. In proportion as our relations with England improved, those with France grew worse. Mr. Monroe, after a career of light-headed mischief unparalleled in our diplomatic history, had finally been recalled from France. Mr. Charles Cotesworth Pinckney had been sent in his stead, and had been refused a reception. With matters in this state, and on the heels of a savage controversy with the French minister, Mr. Adams took the helm. The country was again on the verge of war, and the first question which confronted the administration was the settlement of this difficulty. The question was, whether we should stand upon our dignity and prepare at once for war, or make another effort for peace.

The decision of this question brought to light the existence of a third faction which agreed neither with Hamilton nor Adams, although in general sympathy with the former. Its representative and most active leader was Colonel Pickering, the secretary of state, and it found its principal support among the Federalists of New England. Hamilton regarded the French republic with unqualified dislike and distrust. He believed that the war they were then waging was directed against everything he held most precious, against constitutional liberty, law, order, and society. At the same time he was too much of a statesman not to perceive that war ought to be avoided by us if it was possible, and that the policy which he had advocated with reference to England should also be pursued toward France. The cabinet faction, going beyond Hamilton in their hatred of French principles, believed that the sooner we were committed to open hostilities with the great republic, and all that it represented, the better. Adams, however, took the same view as Hamilton, and the policy of sending three special peace commissioners prevailed. Before the force of the united opinion of the two chief leaders all factions were powerless, and this shows only too plainly the terrible blunder made by Adams in not making it his first object to consult with Hamilton, and

act in conjunction with him. So far all went well; but on the composition of the commission, which was of deep political importance in any event, and which in case of war was sure to be of the greatest moment in its effect upon public opinion, Adams and Hamilton parted company.

All were agreed that Pinckney must be one of the three commissioners, and that the commission ought to consist of two Federalists and one Democrat. Pinckney represented the South, and Hamilton wished that the other Federalist should be taken from the North, and that the Democrat should be Madison or even Jefferson, — in other words a leading Virginian and Democrat who was widely known and personally respected by all parties, a "character," as Hamilton expressed it, "in whom France and the opposition had full reliance." Adams, carried away by the suspicion that an attempt was being made to force upon him a nomination from the Hamiltonian faction in New England, took Marshall, from Virginia, and Gerry, as the Democrat, from Massachusetts. To take both Federalists from the South, where the party had no strength, was hardly wise, but to take a northern Democrat in place of Madison, especially a man of Gerry's slender abilities, was a most serious blunder. Gerry brought discredit on the mission by his weakness and over-confi-

dence, and produced a good deal of mischief, although it may be questioned whether he affected materially the general result. His appointment was not only a poor one in itself, but it had a bad effect at home, exasperated the feeling in certain quarters against the President, was generally considered injudicious, and caused Adams much subsequent annoyance. The general policy of Washington's time was, however, maintained. As in the case of Jay, Hamilton was for very stiff instructions, at first almost unreasonably so, and, as in the former instance, milder counsels prevailed, and the envoys went forth upon their mission.

The result is well known. The commissioners were insulted and outraged in every possible way. They were improperly received; and when attempts to bully and bribe had failed to sway them, they were driven from France. To the opposition clamoring for information about the negotiation with their beloved France, Mr. Adams sent in the famous X. Y. Z. correspondence. The mixture of swindling and browbeating thus disclosed, heightened as it was by news of a decree far surpassing its predecessors in defiance of neutral rights, and by the burning of one of our vessels by a French privateer, lighted up a hot flame of indignation which swept rapidly and fiercely over the country, setting it ablaze with the spirit of war.

This exposure utterly discredited also the party of the opposition friendly to France and broke them down completely. One by one they slipped away from Congress, where they had a majority, leaving the undaunted Gallatin to face not merely defeat, but what seemed to be disgrace. Jefferson, with a discomfited whine, bowed before the storm, and even Giles is said for the moment to have lost a little of his usual rough effrontery. With the Federalists, of course, everything was just the reverse. Enthusiastic addresses poured in upon the President, who responded to them with equal fervor, and in a most spirited manner. In the press, and at public meetings, men rivaled each other in denunciation of France. War vessels were fitted out by private subscription and presented to the government; and Marshall, returning to be received with fêtes and banquets, raised the public wrath to a still higher pitch. The Federalists carried rapidly all the strong measures of defense which they deemed essential, — a provisional army and an increase of troops, of fortifications, and of the navy. At the next general election they triumphed, and found themselves in possession for the first time of a strong majority. The conduct of France raised them to the zenith of their power, but it was of short duration, and their strength brought with it the

events which reduced them soon after to utter ruin. The first result was the fight made by the President against the appointment of Hamilton to the command of the provisional army.

Washington was selected as commander-in-chief, and consented to serve, provided he should not take an active part until the army should be actually in the field, and provided further that he should have the choice of the officers who were to be next him in rank and to act as his staff. Washington was clearly of opinion that the army ought to be constituted *de novo*, and that there should be no question of revolutionary rank. He accordingly sent to the President a list of major-generals, in the following order: Hamilton, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, and Knox. This gave the practical command and the work of organization to Hamilton. Mr. Adams sent Washington's name at once to the Senate, and then the major-generals in the order prescribed by Washington. This done, he wheeled about when it came to signing the commissions, and took the ground that Knox was the senior officer on account of his revolutionary rank. He disregarded the fact that, by the precedents of the Congress of the confederacy, officers ranked in the order of their confirmation. He refused to admit that Hamilton was the man best fitted for the post, and was so con-

sidered by the public; he plunged himself and his party into a bitter personal quarrel, and all because he disliked Hamilton, and was enraged at the opposition of the cabinet to himself.

The President's course led to an immediate and desperate struggle. Not only the cabinet, but all the leading Federalists, urged upon him the adoption of Washington's list. He alienated Knox from Hamilton, who was a friend of long standing, and ultimately caused the former's resignation, while Pinckney on his return fully admitted the propriety of the appointments, and cheerfully took service in the rank assigned by Washington. The pressure of opinion upon the President grew stronger constantly, and yet, though he writhed a good deal in anger, he seemed to become more fixed in his purpose. The Federalist leaders, deeply alarmed, turned to Mount Vernon for assistance. In unmistakable language Washington told Adams that if the agreement made between them was not adhered to he should resign. Adams was a bold and stubborn man, but he dared not face the displeasure of Washington and the consequences of his resignation on such a question. In bitterness of spirit he gave way, and appointed Hamilton to the first place, and the sense of defeat changed keen dislike to an almost venomous hatred of the man whom he chose to

think his rival. The conduct of Adams in this whole affair is utterly indefensible. There is not a single valid reason for the course he took. From a personal feeling he brought on a bitter, senseless, and perfectly futile quarrel, weakened the party and himself, and all because he disliked the man who happened to be best fitted for the command of the army. No adverse criticism can be made upon Hamilton, except that, while at first he quietly accepted the situation to which he was called by Washington and the party, after the contest over his appointment began, he exhibited a rather disagreeable and aggressive self-assertion common enough in men of great abilities and commanding wills, and from which he was on rare occasions not wholly free. Thus the appointment was finally made, leaving a legacy of heart-burning, a memory of compulsion and defeat on one side, and of injustice and triumph on the other.

With his accustomed zeal, Hamilton at once threw himself into his new work, and gave himself up to it heart and soul. His task was that of organization and preparation, for which he had a peculiar genius, and it is needless to say that his work was of the best. He was first called upon to draft a plan for the fortification of the harbor of New York and superintend its execution, funds having been appropriated by

the State for that purpose. This was somewhat outside the regular path of his duty, but he gave it his attention and made the necessary arrangements. Soon after, he met Washington and Pinckney at Philadelphia and drew up a scheme which Washington adopted for the apportionment of officers and men among the States, for a recruiting system, and for supplies, arsenals, camp equipages, and ordnance. In a second paper, likewise accepted by Washington, he laid out a plan for the organization of the army, in which he dealt with the questions of pay, uniforms, rations, rank, promotion, field exercise, regulation of barracks, the police of garrisons and camps, and the issue of arms, clothing, and fuel. These elaborate suggestions were necessarily hasty, but they exhibit great familiarity with the various subjects, fertility of resource, and broad and comprehensive views. They received the highest proof of their value in gaining the approval of Washington, the best and most experienced soldier of the day.

When Congress assembled, Hamilton sent to the Senate a bill which became law and was entitled, "An Act for the better organizing of the troops of the United States." This measure changed as little as possible the existing system, dealing chiefly with the proportion to be established between the number of officers and of

men. Hamilton's purpose was to make a "fundamental arrangement," so that in the future the existing system could be increased or diminished at will without altering the form of organization. He also drafted a bill for a "Medical Establishment," and devised plans for the classification and organization of the militia, for trade with the Indians, and for military supplies, and from time to time he issued circulars to the army to check intemperance, dueling, and desertion, and to promote discipline. McHenry, in fact, turned to Hamilton for instructions on every point connected with the War Department, while Stoddert and Wolcott sought his advice in an almost equal degree as to the policy to be pursued with regard to the navy and the treasury. In the spring of 1799 he made every necessary arrangement for the invasion of Louisiana and the Floridas. He also prepared a scheme for the establishment and maintenance of frontier posts, and devoted much time and attention to the fortification of New York. Hamilton's bills for organization, for the medical establishment, and for the eventual augmentation of the army, all became laws, but the work of actual recruiting was constantly delayed, until at last, after the departure of the second peace commission, it became obvious that there would be no war,

and all active measures gradually ceased. Hamilton's military services at this time went no farther than the elaboration of plans and the work of preparation; the only lasting result of his labors being the establishment of the West Point Academy a few years later in general conformity with his suggestions. Hamilton in all these matters exhibited, however, not only his usual energetic and indefatigable industry and his readiness in dealing with a wide range of topics, but he showed that he possessed in a high degree the military attributes of foresight, breadth of view, knowledge of details, and great capacity for organization. Whether if he had been called into actual service he would have displayed in equal measure the still more important qualities which are essential to a successful general in an active campaign and on the field of battle, must remain mere conjecture. This much is certain, that he did the best that was possible in all that fell to him to do, and that his strong hand was felt in all departments of the government in regard to everything relating to the war policy of the United States.

But while Hamilton was devoting himself to these laborious duties, he was working out in his usual manner detailed and comprehensive plans for the general conduct of the war. He saw that there would be no battles to fight with

France in the East, and he was convinced that the only way to reach her was through the sides of her ally, Spain. He therefore designed to wrest from the latter power the region of the extreme Southwest, and give to the United States final and complete control of the great valley of the Mississippi. These ideas were of long standing, and were part of that conception of nationality and of national greatness which was the predominating influence in Hamilton's public career. The last resolution which he had introduced in the Congress of the Confederation declared the "navigation of the Mississippi to be a clear and essential right and to be supported as such." A few years later he had said in the cabinet that the free use of that river was "essential to the unity of the empire." In 1798 he urged upon Pickering the necessity of getting possession of Louisiana and the Floridas, and in the following year he wrote: "I have been long in the habit of considering the acquisition of those countries as essential to the permanency of the Union."

It seemed now as if the moment had come when these theories might be put into execution, and it is no wonder that they were uppermost in Hamilton's thoughts. Both from a political and military point of view he was right. The national and imperial instincts of his nature did

not mislead him. The Mississippi and the great regions of the Southwest were essential to union and empire. The future has justified him, and in no single point has it shown more strikingly the range of Hamilton's vision as a statesman and the force and penetration of his mind. By one of the strange but not uncommon contradictions which we meet with in human history, it fell to the lot of Hamilton's keenest foe to carry out the most imperial part of the great Federalist's national policy. It was reserved to Jefferson to acquire by purchase, and in what was then thought to be defiance of the Constitution, the vast territory which Hamilton planned only a few years before to win by arms. The accomplishment of the work fell to other hands, but the conception was Hamilton's, and it was he who first formulated the brilliant scheme, and after years of waiting devised means which would have assured success.

Besides the control of the Mississippi and the conquest of the Southwest there had long been in Hamilton's mind still another idea which, while national in its origin, was intended rather to increase the power of the United States than to strengthen their union. "Our situation," he wrote in "The Federalist," "invites, and our situation prompts us to aim at an ascendant in American affairs." We were to be dominant

in the western hemisphere. We were not only to be neutral as to the affairs of Europe, but we were to exact from Europe neutrality in all regarding America, and were to crush out European influence. Here is the Monroe doctrine in its widest scope, and with such notions long cherished, and while he was revolving these plans for the acquisition of Louisiana, it is no wonder that Hamilton's imagination was touched by the schemes of the Spanish adventurer Miranda. He began to believe that the time had come for conquests beyond the Mississippi which should result in the liberation of the Central and even of the South American States, and in the establishment of republics in those regions.

Miranda had been long engaged in these schemes, and had already endeavored to enlist England as an ally. He now wished to have England and the United States unite and undertake the overthrow of the Spanish power in South America. This fell in with the Federalist longing to join all decent people in a crusade against the hated French republic. Such an alliance would insure the ruin of Spain, the tool of France, the closing of the South American ports to French privateers, and great acquisition of territory to the United States. It was, in case of war with France, both a wise and sufficiently practicable policy, and it is no won-

der that Hamilton thought it worth consideration by the government, and at all events judged that it was well to be informed as to the progress of such a movement. He therefore sought to interest the government in Miranda, and no doubt gave undue importance to that soldier of fortune; but his own campaign was that of a great general and a far-seeing statesman. Military glory appealed strongly to a sweeping intellect and powerful nature like Hamilton's, and we may readily believe that he dreamed of extensive conquests and great deeds of arms. That he thought the opportunity likely to come at that moment is more than doubtful. It is certain that it never affected his public course, and that he never aimed at anything which, however it might redound to his own fame, went beyond an extension and consolidation of the power of the United States. The theory that his mind teemed with visions of empire and of military power in the Napoleonic fashion, schemes fraught with danger and perhaps despotism, is due to the heated and hostile mind of Mr. Adams. Hamilton was not only extremely guarded in his correspondence with Miranda, to whom he said that "he could personally have no participation in his plan unless patronized by the government of the United States," but he was also in consultation with Rufus King, our

cautious minister to England. Throughout he scrupulously avoided doing or saying anything which could by any possibility give ground for the suspicion that he was taking part in the schemes of an adventurer without the assent of his government. The plan appealed to his strongest instincts as a statesman and soldier, and fired his imagination. It was, too, not unreasonable, and in the event of war Hamilton determined to be in a position to take every advantage of such brilliant possibilities.

But while Hamilton gave himself up to the onerous duties immediately before him, his dreams and aspirations, if he had any, came to a speedy end. The popular indignation and the hearty support of the administration, the bold attitude of the United States, and the fighting qualities of our little navy, already striking telling blows at the French privateers and men-of-war, all impressed France with the fact that she had aroused a nation out of reach of her armies, and capable of becoming a very formidable adversary. The worthy Talleyrand accordingly began to cast about for some means by which he could reëstablish friendly relations, at the lowest possible cost to the pockets and the feelings of the French people and of himself. By circuitous channels, but in direct terms, he conveyed to Mr. Adams the fact that the govern-

ment would be glad to receive an American envoy with all the respect and honor to which he was entitled. Acting on this information, and without a word to any one, not even to his cabinet, the President sent in the nomination of Mr. Vans Murray to be minister to France.

There can be no doubt that honorable peace was then, as in Washington's time, the paramount consideration. Whether it was wise to snap at the very first opportunity held out by France is more questionable. John Adams certainly believed it to be so, but his haste, secrecy, and the abrupt change from his recent utterances, make it impossible not to suppose that one strong motive for this sudden action was to be found in his belief that peace would cripple the war party, including Hamilton, and all others who differed with him. But admitting that John Adams was not only right in principle, but also in the selection of the moment for making peace, yet his mode of doing right was utterly and hopelessly wrong. If his cabinet agreed with him, then concealment was useless; if they were certain to oppose him, then concealment may have been shrewd and cunning, but it was neither very wise nor very brave. In any event, it rent asunder hopelessly the already distracted Federalists. It fell upon the unsuspecting party with the suddenness of

a bolt of lightning. They were stunned by the shock, and their first thought was to defeat the President in the Senate, and to break down his policy and him together. These were the views of men who believed a war with France to be a good thing in itself, because it was the only sure salvation from the pestilent ideas of Paris. They would have had us ally ourselves with England, because it behooved all decent people throughout the world to stand together and stamp out the monstrous doctrines of the French Revolution.

No man hated those doctrines and principles more fervently than Hamilton, and no one sacrificed more than he to opposition to the propaganda of unbridled democracy and consequent anarchy. But, except on one or two occasions, the statesman always prevailed with Hamilton. Except in the case of a common war against France when the results would bring vast and immediate benefits to the United States, he had no mind for an alliance with England, much as he applauded her as the defender of society. He was, on the contrary, disposed to be cool toward her because, with a stupidity really exquisite, she had begun, just as we were embroiled with France, once more to annoy and provoke us with outrageous orders in council. Hamilton's general policy, therefore, was the maintenance

of a strong dignified attitude, backed by armed men and ships, and then a quiet waiting until France should come to her senses and send a minister to us. He never believed war to be a good thing in itself, as did some of his more extreme partisans, who were as headstrong and unruly in their way as the President was in his; but he regarded peace now and always as the first object. In this he was not only wise but consistent with his past. At the same time the sudden change of Adams, his eager grasp at the earliest symptom of returning decency in the French government, disappointed and angered Hamilton as a hasty, needless step, and an uncalled-for sacrifice of a dignity which might have been scrupulously maintained and much enhanced without endangering a speedy and lasting peace. His wrath was still further kindled by the foolish and offensive method of action adopted by the President.

But even in bitterness and anger the statesman was still uppermost. Hamilton may not have been the idol of the masses, nor a skillful manager of men; but there was one set of men whom he knew thoroughly, and those were the leaders of his own party. He knew them to be capable of becoming very dangerous, and he saw them now on the point of rising upon the President and beating him and the party to the

earth together. Checking his own feelings, but without attempting to conceal his indignation, he took the ground with the Federalists at Philadelphia, that peace with honor was now, as always, our first object, and that this step toward it, however unwisely it had been taken, was nevertheless beyond recall. The true policy now was to make the best of what had been done, and treat for peace as it should be treated for. To send Murray alone was absurd; it was the idea of a man blinded with haste and anger. Let a suitable commission be chosen and sent, if circumstances still continued favorable. The party leaders fell in with Hamilton's views, and, Adams himself becoming aware of the error of committing this charge to Murray alone, a strong commission was nominated and confirmed. It is hardly too much to say that Hamilton's prompt decision, his wisdom and statesmanship, saved the party at this moment from an immediate wreck, which he might very readily and naturally have precipitated.

There was some delay in sending the commissioners, owing to the unsettled state of France, and then came another revolution, which led the Federalists to believe that there ought to be a further suspension of the embassy. Hamilton even went to Trenton to urge delay; but Adams, irritated beyond endurance by the stub-

born and exasperating resistance of the war party, as represented by his secretaries, treated counsel and opposition alike with contempt, and ordered the envoys away. Thus ended the first great struggle over our relations with France. Taken as a whole, from the arrival of Genet to the departure of this last commission which effected a treaty, the Federalist policy had been a masterpiece at once bold and sagacious, and one from which the country reaped great and lasting benefit. But behind the fair exterior of success was the triumphant party torn with bitter dissensions, which were sapping its life even in the moment of victory.

In another direction the policy of the Federalists, although giving rise to no quarrels, but meeting, on the contrary, with general approval in the party, became the most efficient cause of their subsequent ruin. The publication of the X. Y. Z. letters, and the flight of members of the opposition from the House of Representatives, left absolute control with the Federalists. They had been accustomed to winning battle after battle, but they had always been in the minority, and the want of numbers was a severe and wholesome discipline which cultivated in that party a prudence to which by nature they were not much given. An absolute majority and the irresistible rise of public opinion against

France turned their heads. They did not lose their wits, but they became more masterful and overbearing than ever. They rapidly pushed through bills for an army, a navy, and fortifications, as well as a naturalization law which required fourteen years' residence, many of them urging the refusal of citizenship to foreigners altogether. So far no harm had been done; but they next resolved to strike at the vile libels which had been poured forth by the opposition press upon Washington, and upon every other honored name, and at the foreigners who wrote the libels or propagated French doctrines and set agitation on foot. With this object they enacted the famous Alien and Sedition laws. In their first draft these laws were intolerable. The Federalists in Congress were guided by the members of the extreme war party, and were now in a very rash mood, so that Hamilton was much alarmed by these bills, and wrote urgently in favor of modifications. Of the Alien Act, and the mode of its execution, he said, "Let us not be cruel or violent." In the first draft of the Sedition Act he saw danger of civil war, and said: "Let us not establish a tyranny. Energy is a very different thing from violence." This was the language of a statesman. But when the laws were modified and passed, they and the principles which they involved received Hamilton's entire support.

There has been a general effort on the part of biographers to clear their respective heroes from all responsibility for these ill-fated measures. The truth is, that they had the full support of the congressmen and senators who passed them, of the President who signed them, and of the leaders in the States, who almost all believed in them; and they also met with very general acceptance by the party in the North. Hamilton went as far in the direction of sustaining the principle of these laws as any one. He had too acute a mind to believe, with many of the stanch Federalist divines of New England, that Jefferson and Madison were Marats and Robespierres, and that their followers were Jacobins, who, when they came to power, were ready for the overthrow of religion and society, and were prepared to set up a guillotine and pour out blood in the waste places of the federal city. But he did believe, and so wrote to Washington, after the appearance of the X. Y. Z. letters, that there was a party in the country ready to "new model" the Constitution on French principles, to form an offensive and defensive alliance with France, and make the United States a French province. He felt, in short, that there was a party in America ready for confiscation and social confusion. A year later, in 1799, he wrote to Dayton, the speaker

of the national House of Representatives, a long letter, in which he set forth very clearly the policy which he felt ought to be pursued. He wished to give strength to the government, and increase centralization by every means, by an extension of the national judiciary, a liberal system of internal improvements, an increased and abundant revenue, an enlargement of the army and navy, permanence in the laws for the volunteer army, extension of the powers of the general government, subdivision of the States as soon as practicable, and finally a strong sedition law, and the power to banish aliens. This was what was termed at that day a "strong and spirited" policy; it would now be called repressive; but by whatever name it is designated, it was the policy of Hamilton, and is characteristic of both his talents and temperament. Except as to the subdivision of States, it was carried out pretty thoroughly in all its main features by the Federalists.

The Alien and Sedition laws, although resisted in Congress, did not much affect public opinion at the elections which immediately ensued, and the Federalists came into the next Congress with a large majority. Numbers, however, availed them little. In the worst days of their minority period they were more effective as a party. The jealousies and quarrels already on

foot came to a fierce culmination on the appointment of the second mission to France. The moderate Federalists of the South, headed by Marshall, sustained the President, while the war party urged his destruction. It was a house divided against itself, and at a time when violent measures had so lessened the great advantages of the last election that the Federalists entered upon the presidential campaign with but a narrow margin for success. Jefferson sounded the alarm in the famous Kentucky resolutions. The doctrine was bad enough, but it was probably merely intended to attract attention to the rapid development of power on the part of the central government. The resolutions of both Kentucky and Virginia were received with little favor anywhere, and in many States with strong and formal reprobation. Hamilton, more deeply stirred by a movement for disunion than he could be by anything else, regarded these resolutions as of great gravity, and urged that they be formally disapproved by Congress and their evil tendencies fully displayed.

Jefferson, however, had achieved his purpose. The suspicions of the country were awakened to the meaning and possible results of such legislation as the Alien and Sedition acts, and to the centralizing policy of the Federalists. The approach of peace, moreover, relaxed the

spirit which had rallied the masses to the side of the Federalists as the defenders of the national honor. Slowly, but surely, the dominant party was losing ground in public opinion. Pennsylvania slipped from them at the state election, and this made a victory in New York of the very last importance. Hamilton threw himself into the struggle with an energy and fire great even for him. But he was now opposed to one who was the first and by no means the least in a long list of men, some of great ability and distinction, who have risen to power and place chiefly by capacity for guiding the dark and complicated intrigues of New York politics. In these Aaron Burr was a master. The election turned largely on the result in the city, and in ward politics Hamilton was no match for his antagonist. Hamilton could neither trade, bargain, nor deal with petty factions. Such work was unworthy of his powerful intellect, and the sacrifice did not even bring the poor reward of success. With voice and pen Hamilton maintained the conflict. His eloquence was unrivaled, his arguments, written and spoken, were unanswerable, but Burr had the votes. New York was lost to the Federalists and ruin stared them in the face.

In the bitterness and passion of defeat Hamilton proposed to Governor Jay to call together

the old legislature and give the choice of presidential electors to districts, thus dividing the vote of New York, which would otherwise be settled by the incoming legislature, who would choose none but Democrats. Jay very frankly declined to consider the scheme, as one wholly improper. The proposition was, in fact, nothing less than to commit, under the forms of law, a fraud, which would set aside the expressed will of a majority of the voters in the State. This is the one dark blot upon the public career of Hamilton. It is no palliation to say that he was urged to it by the Federalist members of Congress. The error of a great leader cannot be excused by saying that lesser men advised him to it. Many times before Hamilton had stepped in boldly and had effectually checked the rash and headstrong impulses of his more extreme friends at Philadelphia. He now fell in with them in support of this high-handed measure. It was he who advised it with Jay, it was he who urged its prosecution, and on his shoulders must rest the responsibility. Hamilton was too clear-sighted even then to attempt to disguise the character of the scheme. He says plainly to Jay, we must not be "overscrupulous," and then adduces a great many lucid and ingenious reasons to show that this is a time when to do a great right one is justified

in doing a little wrong. Arguments on that side of the question were not wanting; they never are to the champions of order, the saviors of society, the "strong men," and the imperialists of this world. That Hamilton was carried away by a passion of disappointment when he wrote this letter is no doubt true, but the root of the matter lay still deeper. The bitterness of defeat and the readiness to use violent means to recover lost ground sprang from the belief, fostered and developed in Hamilton's mind by the French Revolution, that there was a party in this country of democracy, license, and anarchy, that its victory meant ruin to the state, and that salvation could only be assured by the continuance in power of the party of order and Federalism. This frame of mind is not uncommon in the history of party conflicts, but in the days of the "Great Monster," as Hamilton called the French Republic, it was intensified to a degree and carried to an extent hardly ever known before or since. That this dread of the success of the other side in a representative government should have led such a man as Hamilton to make a proposition like that contained in the letter to Jay, is a most melancholy example of the power and the danger of such sentiments, which are wholly foreign to free constitutional systems.

But even while the fortunes of the party were thus declining, they were hurried still faster on their downward course by the ever-increasing bitterness and the greater openness of the quarrels among the leaders. The nomination of the peace commission led to violent attacks upon the President by Pickering, who seems to have resolved to break him down, and these attacks, made in private letters, were now circulated with but little pretense of secrecy among the New England leaders. Immediately after the New York election, which crippled Hamilton by depriving him of the control of the vote of that State in the electoral college, Adams drove McHenry and Pickering from his cabinet. This deepened the feud, and Adams, irritated by the assaults of his opponents, gave loose to his own tongue, at all times a rather unruly member. Among other abusive things, he called his opponents a British faction, and stigmatized Hamilton, in particular, as acting in the interests of England. This attack soon reached Hamilton's ears, and in view of its source he felt that it could not be passed over in silence. He accordingly wrote a brief note, stating that he had heard the reported accusation of the President, and inquiring if the report were true. Receiving no reply he again wrote to Mr. Adams, repeating his question and denying the truth of

the alleged charge. Both notes were courteous and straightforward, but they were passed over in complete silence. It must not be forgotten that there was no open breach between the President and Hamilton. Their relations were as yet friendly, in form at least. Moreover, only a short time before, Mr. Adams had written to Hamilton asking his assistance in securing for Colonel Smith, the President's son-in-law, a desirable position in the army. Hamilton had cheerfully and generously given his services, and his note was pleasant and friendly. Yet, with this incident fresh in his mind, Mr. Adams did not hesitate to refuse to notice a proper and reasonable question asked by the principal officer of the army, who was also one of the most distinguished men in the country. To say that such treatment on the part of Mr. Adams was uncivil, is but little. It was a gross blunder, and was unfortunately of a piece with all Mr. Adams's conduct towards Hamilton. When the latter came to Trenton to urge the suspension of the peace commission, Mr. Adams referred to his visit with a pitying sneer. Hamilton was the most powerful leader of the Federalists; he was the most conspicuous and brilliant statesman in the country; and yet the President, the head of the Federalist party, first undertook to ignore him, then slighted his advice and derided

him, and finally treated his manly inquiry with contemptuous silence. Decency, prudence, and self-interest, to take no higher motives, dictated an opposite course. I am very far from holding Mr. Adams solely responsible for the downfall of the Federalists, but his treatment of Hamilton, tried merely by the test of statesmanship and good politics, shows how completely he failed as a leader of men, and how he became, despite all his courage, honesty, and abilities, a principal cause in the ruin of the party.

Quarrels like these could not long be confined to the knowledge of the leaders. They were sure to break out and, coming to the surface before the public, to work all the vast mischief of which they were capable. They reached their height just as the presidential election drew near. To throw Adams over meant an open split and certain defeat, and the leaders in Congress with much misgiving, and on the part of many with no great good-will, resolved to support him again as a candidate for the presidency, in conjunction with Charles Cotesworth Pinckney for Vice-President. Hamilton made the best of what seemed to him a very bad business. Even after the loss of New York, there was still a chance for the Federalists if South Carolina would vote for both candidates. Hamilton urged, therefore, once more, an equal

vote for both Pinckney and Adams, and again it may be said that his policy was the only one which could have secured success. It was generally supposed, however, that this course would result in the election of Pinckney, a result which Hamilton openly preferred. It was bad enough to have this preference for Pinckney generally known; but Hamilton was now so thoroughly enraged and so completely alienated from the President that he went still farther and wrote a pamphlet designed to show up Mr. Adams's failings, and to vindicate his own position and that of the war Federalists.

The project was so utterly wild that every effort was made to dissuade Hamilton from his purpose. The disapprobation, indeed, was so general that even he resolved at the last moment to limit the circulation of this effusion to a few friends. But it was too late. Burr, through his agents, stole a copy, and the pamphlet appeared. This famous production is a defense of the war Federalists and a personal attack on Mr. Adams. A good deal of the censure was just enough, but the pamphlet as a whole was a piece of passionate folly. Hamilton denounced as unsafe, violent, vain, and egotistic, a Federalist President whose general public policy all Federalists supported; and then wound up his bitter diatribe with the lame and impo-

tent conclusion of advising every one to vote for the man so much to be distrusted. The whole thing was simple self-stultification, and the pamphlet met with no favor except among the Democrats. Even Hamilton's closest friends were frightened and displeased. If the Federalists had openly divided, and the two wings had engaged in controversy, a polemic of this sort might have seemed natural. But for one great leader to publish such an attack upon another, when the party was formally in harmony and upon the eve of a close and doubtful contest for the presidency, was simple madness. It was the work of a man crazed with passion and bent on revenge.

This unhappy incident cannot be dismissed without a word upon Hamilton's relations with the cabinet. It has been charged that in this respect he acted in bad faith. That the cabinet officers went too far in furnishing Hamilton, and others also, with all sorts of information which came to them in a confidential capacity, will not, I think, be questioned. It is not apparent, however, that Hamilton made any improper use of this information; for although he was anxious enough for material, there was none to be had which was of peculiar value or novelty. But there is no ground for accusing Hamilton of bad faith in this particular. He

made a mistake in trying, through his influence with the cabinet, to force the President's hand; but he had a perfect right, as a party leader, to correspond with the secretaries, and to give them his opinions and advice on political questions. He had done the same thing in Washington's time, and no one has ever hinted that there was any impropriety in it. The fact that he was not personally on good terms with Adams does not affect the matter. Hamilton was fully entitled to write private letters to members of the cabinet, and they had a right to receive them. The fact that the secretaries, after they found themselves in opposition to the President, ought to have retired, is a wholly distinct matter, and must be discussed on different grounds. If they chose to be guided by Hamilton, a private individual and unofficial leader, that was their affair, not his. The pamphlet against Adams was passionate, foolish, and contradictory in itself, and it placed Hamilton in a weak and false position, but it was an open attack, and was not liable to the charge of bad faith.

If anything was needed to make the overthrow of the Federalists certain, this unfortunate pamphlet would have done it. But the party's doom was already sealed. South Carolina would vote only for a Southern man, and Pinckney, with the chivalrous sense of duty

which he always displayed, refused to be separated from Adams. The result was the defeat of the candidates of the Federalists, and the close of their party career as rulers of national politics. The struggle of the election did not, however, come to an end in the electoral colleges. The equal vote received by Burr and Jefferson threw the final decision into the House of Representatives, and the former began at once to sound his way toward an arrangement which should bring him in as president over Jefferson. The Federalists in Congress, maddened and reckless by defeat, turned with avidity to the chance of snatching the office from their arch-enemy Jefferson. The crisis was very grave, and indeed threatened civil war. Once more the Federalists at Washington were running to perilous extremes, and once more Hamilton checked them. The wild passion which had led him into the attack on Adams had spent itself, and he was again the cool, wise, far-seeing statesman with his prejudices and impulses under the control of reason. He knew that Jefferson was the fairly chosen President, and that such was the intention of the people. He saw the danger which setting Jefferson aside by an intrigue would bring. Much as he disliked the man, he knew that his former colleague was timid, cautious, and trained in politics of the

better sort. He also knew Burr, and rightly believed the hero of New York city politics to be shallow, dangerous, and utterly unscrupulous. Putting aside all personal feeling, he threw himself into the conflict and exerted his powerful influence to check the mad projects of the Federalists. His intervention probably had a decisive effect. It was certainly courageous, high-minded, and such as became the distinguished leader of a great party. After the storm of the election and the bitterness of party faction, it was a fit conclusion to Hamilton's career as a public man, which practically ended with the downfall of his party.

CHAPTER X

PROFESSIONAL LIFE — DUEL AND DEATH

THE defeat of the Federalists left Hamilton wholly free to devote himself to the practice of the law. Fortunately for him, his work was something very different from the merely nominal occupation which retired statesmen and disappointed politicians sometimes dignify by the name of "their profession." The proscriptive laws against Tories, as has been said, had given to Hamilton, Burr, and a few others complete possession of the New York practice after the Revolution, and Hamilton had not neglected the opportunity thus offered. While deeply engaged in the work of the Constitution, he labored at his profession, in which he had been the leader almost from his first appearance. He laid aside a lucrative practice when he took the treasury, and, having exhausted his savings while in office, returned to the bar a poor man, with his mind fixed on making money and fame as a lawyer. With his brilliant reputation as a public man and party leader, he at once received more business than he had left in 1789.

In a few months he was again at the head of the bar, and master of a large and growing practice. After the election of Jefferson he became even more absorbed in the law than before, and drifted steadily out of the current of public affairs. With this he was now well content. He said with truth that he had no desire to reënter public life, unless called forth by the contingency of a foreign or civil war. Unfortunately for himself, he considered the latter misfortune only too likely to happen.

Much might be written of Hamilton as a lawyer. His professional success has been dimmed by the brilliancy of his career as a statesman; but there can be no doubt that he deserves a very high place among those Americans who have been most distinguished at the bar. As a constitutional lawyer it is not necessary to go beyond the argument on the national bank to show a capacity in this direction of the very first order. Hamilton's powers of statement and of clear, cogent reasoning were admirably adapted for arguments to the court on points of law and equity, and in this field he shone from the outset. Fortunately, we have proof of his power before the court and also of his effectiveness with a jury, the most evanescent form of legal ability, in two very famous cases which were of sufficient importance to escape oblivion.

One was a prosecution for libel directed against Henry Croswell, the Federalist editor of a small local journal. The obnoxious paragraph was to the effect that Jefferson had paid Callender to slander Washington and Adams. This statement was not particularly outrageous, if compared to those which filled the newspapers on both sides at that time, and it had moreover already appeared in substance in the "New York Evening Post." But the Democratic leaders, now that they had come to power, were resolved to try their hand at muzzling the press and putting a stop to the stinging attacks of their opponents. They, therefore, selected a weak assailant, and prepared to make an example of him for the benefit of the Federalist editors. With a Democratic sheriff, Democratic grand jury, and Democratic judge, they obtained an indictment, after exhibiting a rough disregard of the rights of the defendant. When the case came to trial, Hamilton, who had been urged to assume the defense, was unable to appear, and the prosecution was pushed unrelentingly. Croswell's counsel asked for time, in order to get witnesses from Virginia to testify to the truth of the libel; but Judge Lewis held that the jury were judges only of the fact, and not of the truth or intent of the publication. After a night's deliberation the jury found Croswell

guilty, and his counsel at once moved for a new trial on the ground of misdirection by the judge. The ruling of Judge Lewis was in direct contradiction of the famous New York precedent established in the Zenger trial, but it found support in the law of England. The issue raised the great question of general verdicts, on which Erskine won his renown and stemmed the tide of reactionary violence in London. It appealed to Hamilton both as a lawyer and statesman, and as the consistent friend of a free press in accordance with what he believed to be the true principles of the common law. He therefore laid everything aside in order to make the principal argument in support of the motion before the Supreme Court at Albany. The case excited intense interest. Every one flocked to the court room, and the legislature could not obtain a quorum. Hamilton closed the case, and the court adjourned the first day before he had finished his address. He concluded the next morning, and occupied in all six hours. His argument was a splendid piece of reasoning and eloquence, marked by all the qualities of thought and expression for which he was distinguished. Chancellor Kent, whose notes have preserved to us a description of this argument,[1] said that "it was the greatest forensic

[1] See Appendix, Note C.

effort Hamilton ever made. He had bestowed unusual attention on the case, and he came prepared to discuss the points of law with a perfect mastery of the subject. There was an unusual solemnity and earnestness on his part in the discussion. He was, at times, highly impassioned and pathetic. His whole soul was enlisted in the cause. The aspect of the times was portentous, and he was persuaded that if he could overthrow the high-toned doctrine of the judge it would be a great gain to the liberties of this country. . . . The anxiety and tenderness of his feelings, and the gravity of his theme, rendered his reflections exceedingly impressive. He never before in my hearing made any effort in which he commanded higher reverence for his principles, nor equal admiration for the power and pathos of his eloquence." There is no need to attempt any addition to this statement. A man who could win praise, so high and so unstinted, from such a man as Chancellor Kent, requires no further testimony to his rank and ability as a great lawyer.

The other famous case which has come down to us, and to which I have already alluded, was a murder trial, which appealed strongly to the interest and sympathies of the community, and which exhibited Hamilton's powers in a new light, and one very different from that of the

prosecution of Croswell. The body of a girl was found in a well, and her lover, a young mechanic of good character, was suspected, indicted, and put on trial for the murder. Hamilton was retained for the defense, the difficulty of which was greatly enhanced by the strong popular feeling against his client. The evidence was nearly all circumstantial, and Hamilton dealt with it as it was put in very effectively, and greatly impaired its effect. The government then called their principal witness, one Croucher, a fellow of evil repute and on whose direct testimony the verdict depended. Hamilton had become convinced that Croucher was the real culprit, and he knew that his evidence was the crucial point in the case. When the examination in chief was concluded, the night was well advanced. Hamilton sent for two candles, and by placing one on each side of the witness box threw Croucher's face into strong relief, and then confronted him with a fixed and piercing gaze. Objection was made to this procedure, but the court overruled the objection, and Hamilton then said with deep solemnity, "I have special reasons, deep reasons, reasons that I dare not express, reasons that, when the real culprit is detected and placed before the court, will then be understood." He paused, and the attention of every one was riveted in

breathless silence upon the witness. Hamilton continued: "The jury will mark every muscle of his face, every motion of his eye. I conjure you to look through that man's countenance to his conscience." A severe cross-examination followed. The wretched witness stumbled, contradicted himself, and utterly broke down. The jury acquitted the prisoner without leaving their seats. The subsequent history of Croucher,[1] who left the court room covered with suspicion and contumely, justified Hamilton's device, which under ordinary circumstances would not be permissible. The incident shows in Hamilton that quickness of apprehension, force of personality, and fertility of resource as well as the dramatic sense, which are all such important and necessary qualities to great advocates before a jury. These two cases, in different ways, are good illustrations of Hamilton's power and success at the bar.

The popular belief in the certainty of Hamilton's winning cases was extraordinary, and while it brought him briefs without number it reveals at the same time the great secret of his success as an advocate. Men came to think that, if he ex-

[1] Croucher was convicted of rape on a child, was pardoned, went to Virginia, there committed a fraud, and fled to England, where he is said to have been executed for a heinous crime.

erted himself, he could compel any one, whether judge or juryman, to agree with him. This idea sprang from a vague perception of what was, in reality, the very essence of Hamilton's mind and character. Force of intellect and force of will were the sources of his success. Eloquence he had in abundance, but it was that of the parliamentary orator and debater rather than that of the advocate to a jury. He was, above all things, fitted for the Senate, and it was the eloquence of the Senate that he brought into the courts. He rarely attempted to deal with that complicated machine, a jury, by any of the various and difficult methods characteristic of the greatest advocates; but he addressed them as he did a convention, or as he did the public when he spoke through his essays, always relying, mainly, on his power to carry conviction to their reason. Yet he never forgot, when he was speaking, that while he convinced he must also persuade, that reason must not only be satisfied, but prejudices subdued. He supported arguments by resorting to the emotions. He was full of pathos, fervor, and indignation, and when he was stirred they gave warmth and light to all he said. He never indulged in rhetorical flourishes, and his style was simple and severe. He seldom sought to move the passions of men through their imagination. Directness was his

most distinguishing characteristic, and whether he appealed to the head or the heart, he went straight to the mark. The secret lay in the force with which he did it. It was the passionate energy, the strong nature, the commanding, irresistible will, which carried his hearers by storm when reasoning had made a practicable breach, and these were the qualities which made men believe that Hamilton could extort assent and compel submission from the most stubborn and unwilling opponent.

But while Hamilton was thus employed in winning fortune and in adding the fame of the great lawyer to that of the distinguished statesman, while he was ever withdrawing more and more from politics, planning a great work on civil government, enjoying his family and ordering the affairs of his farm, at that moment his fate was close upon him. He continued, of course, to take an interest and a more or less active part in public concerns. The Federalists broke up rapidly after their defeat, but he was still the trusted chief of all who held together. Whenever the responsibility of leadership forced him to act he never shrank from the duty, and it was one of these occasions that brought him to his death.

Aaron Burr defeated Hamilton in the struggle for the control of New York, which cost the

Federalists the presidency, but he could not drive his great opponent from his path. Hamilton had stood between him and a foreign mission, and came again athwart his course by frustrating his intrigue for the presidency. Thus baffled among the Federalists, Burr turned to his own party only to see his power waning, and to encounter the dislike and suspicion of Jefferson. The crafty Virginian was bent on the destruction of his would-be rival, and Burr soon found himself hopelessly entangled in the subtilely woven meshes of presidential intrigues, and falling helplessly toward certain ruin. To extricate himself from the disastrous field of national politics, he sought the governorship of New York, behind which was the possibility of a northern confederacy and presidency, — a phantom evoked by the murmurs of secession now heard among New England leaders. Again Hamilton arose and stood in the way of these intrigues, denouncing the schemes of secession, and so dividing the Federalists of New York as to give the election to Lewis, Burr's Democratic rival. Then it was that Burr determined upon revenge. Vengeance must have been his principal if not his only motive, inasmuch as killing Hamilton was not likely to improve his own condition, even though it removed his arch enemy. In 1800 there were many stronger incentives to

call Hamilton out than in 1804, but Burr had then held his peace and bided his time. Now, however, his political fortunes were desperate, and the obloquy sure to come upon him if Hamilton fell by his hand could hardly make matters worse. With cool deliberation he set about forcing a quarrel. He showed his purpose plainly enough by selecting a remark attributed to Hamilton at the time of the caucuses held to nominate candidates for the governorship, which was really applicable to his general public character, was not peculiarly severe, and was perfectly inoffensive, compared with many of the denunciations launched at him by Hamilton only a few years before. Hamilton had no desire to fight, but it was impossible to avoid it, if he admitted the force of the code of honor, when Burr was determined to fix a quarrel upon him. There was an exchange of letters, and finally a meeting was arranged.

Aaron Burr, who was now on the eve of committing the deed which has done more than anything else in his worthless life to keep his memory alive, belonged to a not uncommon variety of the human species. He was one of the conspirator class of which Napoleon III. furnished the most conspicuous example in modern times. It has been the fashion to portray Burr as a being of great but misguided intellect,



Aaron Burr

a human Mephistopheles, — grand, evil, mysterious. In reality he was a shallow man, with a superficial brilliancy, and the conspirator's talent for intrigue of all sorts. He was a successful rake, — bad, unscrupulous, tricky, possessing what women and young men call "fascination," and utterly devoid of any moral sense. He would not stab or poison Hamilton, for he was not a common villain, and had a due respect for criminal and social law. But he was perfectly ready to call Hamilton out and kill him if he could under the rules of a recognized code. This duel has been often spoken of as a murder. In the forum of conscience, before the tribunal of moral laws, Burr was no doubt a murderer; but by the code which he and Hamilton alike recognized, and by the system under which they were brought up, Burr acted in strict accordance with his rights. Hamilton certainly had no ground to complain. He was a fighting man, and he had always admitted the force of the duelist's code of honor. Over and over again he had described Burr in language which, as he was well aware, implied in that day a readiness to answer for it in the field. The fact that on this occasion the words might be confined strictly to Burr's public character availed nothing. Hamilton had repeatedly used "fighting words" in speaking of Burr, and the latter

had the right to demand a reckoning for any particular sentence he might select. There seems to be little doubt that Burr had come to Hamilton not long before in great pecuniary distress, and had been relieved with that large-hearted generosity in which Hamilton never failed. This incident casts a still deeper shade of infamy upon Burr's blackened character, but it does not affect his standing under the code. The code of honor, so called, was bad and false, barbarous even, but those who lived by it were responsible to it and for it. When Hamilton attacked Burr as he did, he ran the risk of a challenge which he could accept or decline as he chose. Such a challenge did not, according to the code of honor, make Burr a murderer, nor did he become one by practicing at a mark before fighting. Every Frenchman, if he has time, goes to the Salle d'Armes before fighting, and a man has as much right to prepare for a duel as for a boat-race or a boxing match. The pity of it all is, that Hamilton felt obliged to yield assent to the requirements of the code.

Each man prepared for the meeting in his own fashion; Burr by pistol practice in his garden, Hamilton by settling the business of his clients. As the fatal day drew near, Hamilton displayed a calm cheerfulness, such as became a gallant man of strong character, and wrote

farewell letters to his wife full of the most intense feeling and touching pathos. Burr took the necessary precautions for the destruction of compromising letters from women whom he had seduced. They met at last, on a beautiful July morning, by the banks of the Hudson. Hamilton fell at the first fire, mortally wounded, discharging his own pistol into the air. He was taken to his home, lingered a few hours in terrible pain, and died, surrounded by his agonized family. Burr went forth unharmed, to engage in abortive treason, and to become a wanderer and an outcast on the face of the earth.

Hamilton's suffering and death caused an outburst of bitter and indignant grief among men of all parties throughout the nation, which has been equaled only in our own time by the popular emotion at the murders of Lincoln and Garfield. The people knew that a great man had fallen. The senseless slaughter of a famous statesman, the useless, needless sacrifice of a man of brilliant abilities in the prime of life, was felt to be almost as much a disgrace as a misfortune, and Hamilton's death did more to abate dueling and make it odious than any event in our history.

The question, however, which presses on us as we consider the circumstances of Hamilton's death is, why did he fight? why did such a man

as he bow before the code to which he fell a victim? It was something far deeper than mere loyalty to a system which he, like other men of his stamp, had accepted as they found it. Hamilton could have set his foot upon the code. The personal courage of the man who stormed the Yorktown redoubt was beyond question or cavil. He could have said: "I renounce the code; it is senseless and barbarous. I have attacked you as a public man, and I choose to consider it a purely public matter. I decline to fight." He could have said this, and he would have said it had he not felt that the need of conforming to certain prejudices made the sacrifice imperative. Before he went to the fatal meeting he put upon paper a statement which gave with his own unrivaled force and clearness the objections to dueling, and the seemingly all-powerful motives which urged him to refuse to risk his life and the welfare of his children. At the end of this remarkable paper he gives his reason for meeting Burr in these words: "The ability to be in future useful, whether in resisting mischief or effecting good, in those crises of our public affairs which seem likely to happen, would probably be inseparable from a conformity with public prejudice in this particular." Hamilton was a man, not only of courage enough to fight a duel, but he possessed that far higher courage

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which would have enabled him to refuse the challenge and face a public prejudice, the strength of which in his own case he sadly overestimated. What, then, were the possible crises which he foresaw, and which led to his fatal decision?

The opinions which caused these apprehensions are of the utmost importance to a correct understanding of his life and work. They furnish the key to the principles which guided him through a large part of his career as a public man, and they produced certain settled beliefs which finally drove him to accept Burr's challenge and thus hurried him to his death. I propose, therefore, to trace the growth and development of these opinions by means of extracts from his letters. In these passages we shall see the effect upon Hamilton of the French Revolution, and the dangers which he came to believe threatened the country. We shall then understand the nature of the crisis which haunted his imagination, and which caused him to sacrifice his life. In these same passages we shall also learn incidentally, from his own lips, how intense was his love of nationality and how deep his hatred of secession; and we shall see, too, in the most striking way, how purely national were the principles which inspired his foreign policy, and how utterly baseless were the accusations of undue sympathy with Great Britain.

The first extract is from a letter to Lafayette written in October, 1789, when everything looked so fair and smiling at the dawn of the French Revolution. We see here the remarkable penetration and statesmanlike prescience of Hamilton, as well as his knowledge and keen perception of forces, social and political, as he points out the dangers which he dreaded and which hardly any one then foresaw, but which all came to pass. In his fears we detect, too, the first germs of his subsequent opinions. He says to his old comrade-in-arms: —

"I have seen with a mixture of pleasure and apprehension the progress of the events which have lately taken place in your country. As a friend to mankind and to liberty I rejoice in the efforts you are making to establish it, while I fear much for the final success of the attempts, for the fate of those I esteem who are engaged in it, and for the danger, in case of success, of innovations greater than will consist with the real felicity of your nation. If your affairs still go well, when this reaches you, you will ask why this foreboding of ill, when all the appearances have been so much in your favor. I will tell you: I dread disagreements among those who are now united (which will be likely to be improved by the adverse party), about the nature of your constitution. I dread the vehement character of your people, whom I fear you may find it more easy to bring on, than to keep within proper bounds after you have put them in

motion. I dread the interested refractoriness of your nobles who cannot all be gratified, and who may be unwilling to submit to the requisite sacrifices. And I dread the reveries of your philosophic politicians, who appear in the movement to have great influence, and who, being mere speculatists, may aim at more refinement than suits either with human nature or the composition of your nation."

The next extract is from a letter written rather more than three years later, when these early anticipations had become terrible realities, and when the storms of the revolution had begun to disturb our own politics. Speculation as to results in France was at an end. All the possibilities that Hamilton had dreaded then were accomplished facts, and he was now anxious to know how much the same perils were to be feared in this country. He wrote to his friend Colonel Carrington, in April, 1793, to learn the state of public opinion in Virginia; and from Carrington's reply we discover what his inquiries were, and thus catch the drift of his thought at that time. He wished to know what the feeling was in Virginia as to the revolutionary cause in France; as to the execution of the king, the adoption of a neutrality policy by the United States, the maintenance or abandonment of the French treaties, and as to the reception of Genet. He soon felt assured, ap-

parently, that the same dangerous forces existed in this country as in France, and only doubted as to their extent and power among the people. In a letter of the same year (1793), after describing with marked disgust Genet's reception on arriving in Philadelphia, he speaks of the promoters of the affair as the opponents of the government and disturbers of order, and then says:

"We too have our disorganizers. But I trust there is enough of virtue and good sense in the people of America to baffle every attempt against their prosperity, though masked under the specious garb of an extraordinary zeal for liberty. They practically, I doubt not, adopt this sacred maxim, that without government there is no true liberty."

Having already expressed his belief in the probability of "combinations" to control our politics in foreign interests, he then goes on after the passage just quoted to deprecate violent demonstrations of attachment to France, and to repudiate all comparisons between her revolution and ours. "I own I do not like the comparison," he says, and then follow his reasons, which are worth giving in full because they state in a moderate and yet forcible manner the grounds for his opinions as to the dominant movement of the age, and express very admirably the causes and the reasoning on which his principles and those of the Federalists gen-

erally were founded. It is an excellent exposition of the feelings which actuated the opposition to the French Revolution and its theories: —

"When I contemplate the horrid and systematic massacres of the 2d and 3d of September; when I observe that a Marat and a Robespierre, the notorious promoters of these bloody scenes, sit triumphantly in the convention and take a conspicuous part in its measures, that an attempt to bring the assassins to justice has been obliged to be abandoned; when I see an unfortunate prince, whose reign was a continued demonstration of the goodness and benevolence of his heart, of his attachment to the people of whom he was the monarch, who though educated in the lap of despotism, had given repeated proofs that he was not the enemy of liberty, brought precipitately and ignominiously to the block without any substantial proof of guilt as yet disclosed, — without even an authentic exhibition of motives, in decent regard to the opinions of mankind; when I find the doctrines of atheism openly advanced in the convention and heard with loud applause; when I see the sword of fanaticism extended to force a political creed upon citizens who were invited to submit to the arms of France as the harbingers of liberty; when I behold the hand of rapacity outstretched to prostrate and ravish the monuments of religious worship erected by those citizens and their ancestors; when I perceive passion, tumult, and violence usurping those seats where reason and cool deliberation ought to prevail, I acknowledge that

I am glad to believe there is no real resemblance between what was the cause of America and what is the cause of France; that the difference is no less great than that between liberty and licentiousness. I regret whatever has a tendency to compound them, and I feel anxious, as an American, that the ebullitions of inconsiderate men among us may not tend to involve our reputation in the issue."

Two years later he felt that there was danger of actual outbreaks at a time when our relations with France had become very strained and threatening. The dangerous elements, he seems to have thought, were really on the verge of open violence in New York. He writes to Wolcott in July, 1795: —

"We have some cause to suspect, though not enough to believe, that our Jacobins meditate serious mischief to certain individuals. It happens that the militia of this city, from the complexion of its officers, cannot in general be depended on, and it will be difficult for some time to organize a competent armed substitute. In this situation our eyes turn as a resource in a sudden emergency, upon the military now in the forts, but these, we are told, are under marching orders. Pray converse confidentially with the secretary at war and engage him to suspend the march. Matters in eight or ten days will explain themselves."

The next extract gives a glimpse of Hamilton's theory of foreign policy, and of the purely

national spirit which inspired it. The last clause shows how deeply he felt the evil of the colonial mode of thought, which was then so strong that men did not even realize that they were still beneath its influence. Hamilton already anticipated the essential need of that intellectual freedom and individuality toward Europe which it took years of conflict to bring to pass. The letter is dated December 16, 1796, and is addressed to Rufus King: —

"The favorable change in the conduct of Great Britain towards us, strengthens the hands of the friends of order and peace. It is much to be desired that a treatment in all respects unexceptionable from that quarter should obviate all pretext to inflame the public mind.

"We are laboring hard to establish in this country principles more and more *national*, and free from all foreign ingredients, so that we may be neither 'Greeks nor Trojans,' but truly Americans."

A few months later (April 10, 1797) he shows strongly in a letter to William Smith how averse he was to violence, either in favor of or against any foreign people whatsoever, whether they were the English, whom he respected, or the French, whom he detested, because he knew that such violence was inconsistent, not only with dignity, but with a true national pride: —

"It is unpleasant to me to know that I have for some time differed materially from many of my friends on public subjects, and I particularly regret, that at the present critical juncture there is in my apprehension much danger that *sensibility* will be an overmatch for policy. We seem now to feel and reason as the *Jacobins* did when Great Britain insulted and injured us, though certainly we have at least as much need of a temperate conduct now as we had then. I only say God grant that the public interest may not be sacrificed at the shrine of irritation and mistaken pride."

The same feeling finds expression in the following passage from a letter to Oliver Wolcott, dated June 6, 1797: —

"I like very well the course of executive conduct in regard to the controversy with France, and I like the answer of the Senate in regard to the President's speech.

"But I confess, I have not been well satisfied with the answer reported in the House. It contains too many hard expressions; and hard words are very rarely used in public proceedings. Mr. Jay and other friends here have been struck in the same manner with myself. We shall not regret to see the answer softened down. *Real firmness* is good for everything. *Strut* is good for nothing."

In a similar strain he writes to Pickering a few months later (March 27, 1798), defining

the proper relations to be maintained with England, in case the war against France should be actively prosecuted: —

"I am against going immediately into alliance with Great Britain. It is my opinion that her interests will insure us her coöperation to the extent of her power, and that a treaty will not secure her further. On the other hand a treaty might entangle us. Public opinion is not prepared for it."

England, he says, should give sufficient powers to her minister here to meet all exigencies, and to enter into alliance if opportunity and public opinion permitted it. Then he refers to the necessity of acquiring Louisiana, which at that moment held a leading place in his thoughts.

In the next letter, which I shall quote, we see, for the first time, a plain allusion to the "crisis" which might in the event of its occurrence have a decisive effect upon his actions and upon his career. The letter is addressed to Jay, who wished to appoint Hamilton to the vacancy in the United States Senate caused by the resignation of Judge Hobart, and is dated April 24, 1798.

"I have received your two favors of the 19th instant. I feel, as I ought, the mark of confidence they announce. But I am obliged by my situation to decline the appointment. This situation you are too well acquainted with to render it necessary for me to

enter into explanation. There may arrive a crisis when I may conceive myself bound once more to sacrifice the interests of my family to public call. But I must defer the change as long as possible."

How deeply rooted his convictions had now become as to the dangers to be apprehended from the influence of France and of French ideas, and how real and menacing he felt these perils to be in the United States, are well illustrated in a letter to Washington, dated May 19, 1798. I have already referred to this letter in a previous chapter, but the passage in question deserves a full quotation in this connection.

"It is more and more evident that the powerful faction which has for years opposed the government, is determined to go every length with France. I am sincere in declaring my full conviction, as the result of a long course of observation, that they are ready to *new model* our constitution under the *influence* or *coercion* of France; to form with her a perpetual alliance, *offensive* and *defensive*, and to give her a monopoly of our trade by *peculiar* and *exclusive* privileges. This would be in substance, whatever it might be in name, to make this country a province of France. Neither do I doubt that her standard, displayed in this country, would be directly or indirectly seconded by them, in pursuance of the project I have mentioned."

His fears of social confusion were not only,

as we see here, fully aroused, but his pride in American nationality was deeply touched. In another passage, in the same letter, his dread and dislike of anything sectional in our politics, or of anything suggesting geographical division, and consequent secession, come out very strikingly.

"It is painful and alarming to remark that the opposition faction assumes so much a geographical complexion. As yet, from the south of Maryland, nothing has been heard, but accounts of disapprobation of our government, and approbation of or apology for France. This is a most portentous symptom and demands every human effort to change it."

The mischiefs which he anticipated seemed to him in this exciting year to be so close at hand that we find him preparing in his own mind practical measures for meeting and overcoming them. His first thought, of course, was for the army, upon which he relied for the maintenance of order and government. It was with this purpose that he wrote as follows to Otis, December 27, 1798: —

"Any reduction of the actual force appears to me inexpedient. It will argue to our enemies that we are either very narrow in our resources, or that our jealousy of his designs has abated. Besides, that with a view to the possibility of internal disorders alone, the force authorized is not too considerable.

The efficacy of militia for suppressing such disorders is not too much to be relied on."

The army was his chief reliance, but he also had an extended plan for the proper course to be pursued by the Federalists now that they were in possession of all branches of the government. This policy is fully set forth in the well-known letter to Dayton, written in 1799. I have already referred to it and given an outline of its contents. It advised a vigorous strengthening of the central government in all directions, including a division of the large States, and the enactment of sharp alien and sedition laws. It is, as I have said, the best exposition of Hamilton's views at that trying period, is strongly characteristic of its author, and was so far as possible carried out by the Federalists.

A little later in the same year, and in a similar spirit, he wrote to ask the attorney-general, Hoffman, to prosecute a newspaper which had charged him with suppressing the "'Aurora' by pecuniary means."

"Hitherto," he says, "I have forborne to resort to the laws for the punishment of the authors or abettors (of such attacks), and were I to consult personal considerations alone, I should continue in this course, repaying hatred with contempt. But public motives now compel me to a different conduct. The designs

of that faction to overturn our government, and with it the great pillars of social security and happiness in this country, become every day more manifest, and have of late acquired a system which renders them formidable."

He then adds that one engine for the destruction of society is the issue of libels calculated to destroy the character of the most conspicuous supporters of the government, as in this instance, by charging them with attempts to stifle the liberty of the press; and he says that these intrigues and calumnies are carried on by American citizens aided by foreign gold.

The immediate danger which Hamilton dreaded at the time of the troubles with France dropped out of sight during the heated struggles which preceded the election of 1800. Peace came, too, bringing quiet in its train everywhere, and, while it served to make the contagion of French principles appear less virulent, it also pushed the "crisis," which Hamilton always anticipated, still farther into the background. After the excitement of the political battle had subsided, and when nothing was left but to watch the course of the Democratic party in full possession of the government, Hamilton seems to have given way to a depression in regard to public affairs very unusual to his strong nature. It seemed to him that all his labors

had been wasted and misunderstood, and that his achievements, and those of the great party which he had led, would crumble away beneath the gradual assaults of the now triumphant opposition. In this mood he wrote bitterly to Gouverneur Morris, giving vent to the disappointment which filled his soul when he thought of the success of his enemies, the seeming ingratitude of the people, and, as he believed, the waste and misapprehension of all the efforts which he had made for the welfare and glory of his country. The letter in question is dated February 27, 1802: —

"Mine is an odd destiny," he says. "Perhaps no man in the United States has sacrificed or done more for the present Constitution than myself; and, contrary to all my anticipations of its fate, as you know, from the very beginning. I am still laboring to prop the frail and worthless fabric. Yet I have the murmurs of its friends no less than the curses of its foes for my reward. What can I do better than withdraw from the scene? Every day proves to me more and more that this American world was not made for me.

"The time may ere long arrive when the minds of men will be prepared to make an effort to *recover* the Constitution, but the many cannot now be brought to make a stand for its preservation. We must wait a while.

"You, friend Morris, are by birth a native of this country, but by *genius* an exotic. You mistake if

you fancy that you are more of a favorite than myself, or that you are in any sort upon a theatre suited to you."

This frame of mind, in which a man in bitterness of spirit gives up a world which he believes to be hopelessly blind and wrong, was thoroughly alien to Hamilton. It could not have lasted long at any time. No matter how desperate the prospect, Hamilton's instinct was ever to push the battle, and to fight on despite all discouragements. Soon after this letter to Morris, therefore, we find him laying out a policy to be pursued by the Federalists in order to check their adversaries and recover their lost ground. The letter is written to Bayard in April, 1802, and is one of the most curious and interesting in all Hamilton's correspondence. It shows how deeply imbued he had become with his dread of social disorders; and the extraordinary scheme which he presents for an association to combat the poisonous French doctrines indicates the development of a state of mind which was certainly highly strained, and almost morbid in its extreme views of public affairs. He gives first some suggestions as to the policy to be followed by the Federalists, which show very strikingly how deeply rooted his opinions had become as to the dangerous state of society and the perils which threatened the country. He

begins by pointing out that men cannot be governed by reason, his estimate of human nature having become much lower in the contemplation of Democratic ascendency. He then says that, while the Federalists have neglected to appeal to the passions and especially to the vanity of men, their opponents have thriven by assiduously pandering to these qualities of mankind. The time has come for the Federalists to repair this error, not by any unworthy or revolutionary devices, but by irregular methods which would be needless under a sound and stable government. He then continues: —

"In my opinion, the present Constitution is the standard to which we are to cling. Under its banners *bona fide* must we combat our political foes, rejecting all changes but through the channel itself provides for amendments. By these general views of the subject have my reflections been guided. I now offer you the outline of the plan they have suggested. Let an association be formed, to be denominated 'The Christian Constitutional Society.' Its objects to be: 1st. The support of the Christian religion. 2d. The support of the Constitution of the United States."

He then sketches its organization and describes its purposes as follows: —

"1st. The diffusion of information.

"2d. The use of all lawful means in *concert* to promote the election of *fit* men.

"3d. The promoting of institutions of a charitable and useful nature in the management of Federalists. The populous cities ought particularly to be attended to; perhaps it would be well to institute in such places — 1st. Societies for the relief of emigrants. 2d. Academies, each with one professor, for instructing the different classes of mechanics in the principles of mechanics and the elements of chemistry. The cities have been employed by the Jacobins to give an impulse to the country; and it is believed to be an alarming fact, that while the question of the Presidential election was pending in the House of Representatives, parties were organizing in several of the cities in the event of there being no election, to cut off the leading Federalists and seize the government."

In addition to this society he urges a strong and immediate effort for the repeal of the law repealing the Judiciary Act, and he counsels in other respects the adoption of a waiting policy until popular opinion should be educated and turned in the right direction.

The last letter from which I shall quote, and Hamilton's last letter on public concerns, relates to the Separatist movement in New England. There is a deep and pathetic interest in these words, written when the shadow of death was actually lying dark upon his path. They show once more that, in all his dread of democracy and French principles, the national sentiment

still rose supreme, and that with his latest breath he resisted any plan which threatened the unity of the country. The letter is addressed to Sedgwick, and is dated July 10, 1804: —

"I will here express but one sentiment, which is, that dismemberment of our empire will be a clear sacrifice of great positive advantages without any counterbalancing good, administering no relief to our real disease, which is *democracy*, the poison of which by a subdivision will only be the more concentrated in each part, and consequently the more virulent."

By these extracts, if they have served their purpose here, we can perceive the drift of Hamilton's thought. We can see the effect of the French Revolution and of the working of political forces in this country upon his opinions, and we are now in a position to understand and define the exact nature of that "crisis" which had haunted Hamilton for years, which had grown to be his deepest conviction and his first thought, and to which he gave up his life.

Hamilton believed the Constitution to be unequal to the burden imposed upon it, and he considered the government too weak. At any moment, as it seemed to him, there might be a general upheaval, and that then the elements which had desolated France and swept over Europe might here engage in a conflict for su-

premacy. Then would the country be menaced with anarchy and ruin; property would be confiscated, society broken up, religion trampled under foot, and everything that makes life worth having would be in jeopardy. Then the salvation of the country and the preservation of constitutional liberty would demand a party of order, an army, and a leader ready to play the part of a savior of society, and establish the government on strong and enduring foundations. That great part, Hamilton felt, would fall to him, and if the contingency had been possible, there can be no doubt that he was the man to whom the party of order would have turned. He could not do this, he could not stand at the head of an army, if it were possible for any man to cast even the most groundless imputation upon his personal courage. He was utterly at fault in supposing that there were in the United States the same elements and the same forces as in France. Both race and history made their existence impossible. The representative democracy developing in America was more hostile to the anarchy of the French Revolution than the strongest and most energetic government which the wit of man could devise. Hamilton's mistake was neither unnatural nor uncommon; but, joined with his just belief of the duty which would devolve upon him in such

a crisis as he anticipated, it made it imperative for him to accept the challenge of Burr. It is neither fanciful nor strained to regard Hamilton's death as a result of the opinions bred by the French Revolution. That terrible convulsion had many illustrious victims of all nations and all creeds, but hardly one more brilliant or more uselessly sacrificed than the great statesman who fell before Burr's pistol that peaceful July morning.

Thus far I have dealt with Hamilton solely as a public man. It is, indeed, difficult to approach him in any other way, when his life and talents were given so constantly and so completely to the service of the public. He died a private man, mourned by a nation; he had lived, except in his very last years, immersed in the affairs of the commonwealth and in the full glare of publicity. Every act of his was scrutinized and examined, every slip chronicled, every mistake magnified, while he stood for years in the highest places, assuming every responsibility and conspicuous before the eyes of all men. This unsparing publicity, which pursued Hamilton in his life, has attended him in his death. No American, except Washington, has had everything which he ever wrote, said, or did, published with such elaboration as has fallen to

the lot of Hamilton. No other American has been, historically speaking, so much discussed, so much criticised, and so much written about. All this enhances the difficulty of any fresh study of Hamilton's life; but at the same time, even the briefest biography would be incomplete without an attempt, at least, to portray him as a man, to analyze the traits of his mind and character, and to define the quality of his greatness.

In person Hamilton was well made, of light and active build, but very small, much below the average height. His friends were wont to call him the "little lion;" and it is somewhat remarkable that his stature seems to have interfered so slightly, if at all, with his success as an orator. A commanding and imposing presence is a great aid in affecting an audience, and yet Hamilton was one of the most impressive speakers of his time. He was, too, the most eloquent man and the most effective advocate of his day, whether in court or in convention, if we can judge by results, by the fragments that remain of his speeches, and by the testimony of eye-witnesses. There was certainly no one who was in active public life during the same period, unless it be John Adams, or Fisher Ames on one memorable occasion, who could for a moment be compared with him as an orator. It is very plain, too, that Hamilton's success in this direc-

tion was by no means wholly due to what he said, or to his power of reasoning and of lucid and forcible statement. The man was impressive. Inches of stature and of girth were lacking, but he was none the less full of dignity. In this, of course, his looks helped him. His head was finely shaped, symmetrical, and massive. His eyes were dark, deep-set, and full of light and fire. He had a long, rather sharp nose, a well-shaped, close-set mouth, and a strong, firm jaw. The characteristics of the spare, clean-cut features are penetration and force. There is a piercing look about the face even in repose; and when Hamilton was moved a fire came into his eyes which we are told had a marvelous effect. But it was the soul which shone through his eyes, and animated his mobile countenance, that made him so effective in speech. As men listened to him, they felt profoundly the mastery of the strong nature, the imperious will, and the passionate energy which gave such force to his pathos, to his invective, and to the even flow of clear, telling argument. The impression which Hamilton was capable of producing is well illustrated by the famous scene of the murder trial, when he laid bare the guilt of Croucher. Yet the excitement of a court-room was not necessary to such a feat. In the quiet of an office, solely by his own resistless determination he

wrested a conveyance, which was unjust and had been unfairly obtained, from the oppressor of his client.

In private life Hamilton was much beloved and most attractive. He talked well and freely. He was open-hearted and hospitable, full of high spirits and geniality. In his own family he was idolized by wife and children. The affection which he inspired in all who knew him was largely due to the perfect generosity of his nature, for he gave time and money with a lavish hand to all who sought his aid. He carried this habit into his business to his own detriment. He would often refuse to make any charge to poor clients, and never could be persuaded to accept anything beyond a reasonable and modest fee. He had in truth a contempt for money, and, while he made a nation's fortune, he never made his own. At his death he left his family little except his name and fame.

Like most men of great talents and strong will, Hamilton had a large measure of self-confidence. Just after he left the treasury, he feared that Congress would fail to treat the finances in a proper way. He wrote to a friend in great wrath that he would not stand tamely by and see the nation disgraced; if Congress did not do their duty they would have to reckon with him. On another occasion he was dis-

pleased by what he considered a useless demand for information on the part of the Senate. He thereupon addressed a communication[1] to that august body in which he lectured them as to their conduct, and took them to task roundly for their misbehavior. This letter is quite a curiosity, and the meekness with which the Senate apparently accepted the rebuke is not the least amusing part of the affair. All this was thoroughly characteristic of the man. The greater the odds the more defiantly and the more confidently he faced opposition. On one or two occasions this self-confidence took the more disagreeable form of self-assertion, but such outbreaks were rare.

Hamilton's defects sprang not from weakness but from the strength of his passions, which sometimes overmastered his reason. Thus it was in his relations with women, which had an unenviable notoriety. It was passion again which led him into the unworthy proposition to Governor Jay and into his wild attack upon Adams. His faults were those of a powerful and passionate nature when it had broken down all the barriers of self-control. His errors are all the more to be regretted because he was a man of

[1] The letter is given in full in Adams's *Life of Gallatin*, p. 116, and is also to be found in *American State Papers; Claims*, p. 77.

such wide influence and striking abilities, and for this reason they were, of course, all the more dangerous.

There is no better evidence of Hamilton's greatness than is to be found in the letters and sayings of his bitterest enemies. Burr pronounced the man to be lost who put himself on paper with him. Jefferson called him the "Colossus of the Federalists," and always referred to the acts and opinions of his opponents as those of Hamilton, speaking of that party by the name of its leader. Ambrose Spencer, the distinguished judge, who had had many conflicts with Hamilton, and, on at least one occasion, had felt the edge of his sarcasm, paid him one of the handsomest tributes ever rendered to his abilities, at the same time characterizing the quality of his greatness and his influence with peculiar felicity: —

"Alexander Hamilton," said Spencer, "was the greatest man this country ever produced. I knew him well. I was in situations often to observe and study him. I saw him at the bar and at home. He argued cases before me while I sat as judge on the bench. Webster has done the same. In power of reasoning Hamilton was the equal of Webster; and more than this can be said of no man. In creative power Hamilton was infinitely Webster's superior. . . . It was he, more than any other man, who

thought out the Constitution of the United States and the details of the government of the Union; and, out of the chaos that existed after the Revolution, raised a fabric every part of which is instinct with his thought. I can truly say that hundreds of politicians and statesmen of the day get both the web and woof of their thoughts from Hamilton's brains. He, more than any man, did the thinking of the time."

Chancellor Kent, who was one of Hamilton's warmest admirers, says of him that —

"He rose at once to the loftiest heights of professional eminence, by his profound penetration, his power of analysis, the comprehensive grasp and strength of his understanding, and the firmness, frankness, and integrity of his character. We may say of him, in reference to his associates, as was said of Papinian: 'Omnes longo post se intervallo reliquerit.'"

There is not much to choose between the praise of the quondam foe and of the constant friend. Both the Federalist and the Democrat, eminent lawyers and judges both, were agreed as to Hamilton's ability.

Among the Federalists Hamilton had a band of devoted friends who comprised a very large proportion of the most distinguished men in the nation. They were an able, strong, hard-headed, and rather dogmatic body, most of them leaders themselves, and holding high places in the

republic. Yet they supported Hamilton with a fidelity which has been rarely equaled. The roll of his followers is enough by itself to establish his position in American history. Indifference was impossible toward Hamilton. He was too strong and too open to inspire lukewarm sentiments, and he was loved and hated with equal intensity. At the same time Hamilton, as I have already said, was preëminently a leader of leaders. He could do "the thinking of his time;" he could issue orders, or plan a policy, or act in conjunction with men who followed or sustained him in obedience to the dictates of reason. But he was never an adept in the difficult and delicate art of managing men wherein his great rival Jefferson stood supreme. He was as far as possible from being a demagogue, and he was not even a popular leader, for he had too great a distrust of democracy to appeal successfully to the sympathy of the masses. In this he was a fit and typical leader of the party to which he belonged. He could not float with the currents of public sentiment and had no faith in them. He was a leader, and could not follow. He could mark out a path and walk in it, and, if the people hesitated or held back, he would walk alone. This did not arise from narrowness, for Hamilton had always great liberality of mind, but simply from

the strength of his convictions and from reliance on his own abilities, which made it impossible for him to seek for success by yielding a jot of what he believed, after mature deliberation, to be right and true. This implies, of course, great force of character; but Hamilton had also a boldness of disposition which stamped itself on his financial and foreign policy, and at times amounted to an almost reckless audacity. The miserable Reynolds affair has cast a shadow upon the honor of James Monroe, and its wretched details have found a place in one of the biographies of Jefferson. No one can desire to rake over the ashes of this miserable scandal, but in its effect it showed the courage of Hamilton in a most striking manner. Drawn by his uncurbed passion into a low intrigue with a worthless woman, he found himself threatened with a black imputation upon his official integrity. At the cost of bitter grief to himself and to all whom he most loved, he published a pamphlet in which he told the whole unpleasant story. The manliness of the act, the self-inflicted punishment, and the high sense of public honor thus exhibited, silenced even his opponents; but the confession was one which must have wrung Hamilton to the quick, and it shows an amount of nerve and determination for which our history can furnish no parallel.

Hamilton's career as a public man had closed before his death. Had he lived longer he would have added to his reputation as a lawyer and writer; but it is very doubtful if he would have again entered public life. His work was done. It was a great work, and had been well performed. He cared but little for office. He was ambitious, but his objects were fame and power, to be obtained by advancing the welfare and dignity of his country. So long as he could lead his party and help to shape the national policy, he was perfectly content to remain in a lawyer's chambers in New York. A great office had to him no value in itself, but only in what he was able to achieve by holding it; and every one will admit that few men have accomplished so much. (He founded the financial system of the United States, and converted the barren clauses of the Constitution into a living organism. He established the doctrine of a liberal construction and of the implied powers; and he shares with Washington the honor of devising and carrying out the foreign policy of the United States. This is enough.) There is no need to rehearse the almost endless list of lesser matters which bear the mark of his fertile and powerful intellect. He was always at work, and we look in vain for sterile places in his life.

There are two classes of statesmen, — those

who are great in their calling, and those who, in addition, represent great ideas. Instances of the former kind abound. Examples of the latter are rare. Hamilton is one of the statesmen of creative minds who represent great ideas. It is for this reason that he left the deep mark of his personal influence upon our history. His principles of finance, of foreign affairs, of political economy, and of the powers and duties of government under the Constitution, may be found on every page of our history, and are full of vitality to-day. But Hamilton is identified with two other ideas which go far deeper, and which have been the moving forces in our national development. He did not believe in democracy as a system of government. He strove with all his energy to make the experiment of the Constitution succeed, but he doubted its merit at the outset, and finally came to the conclusion that in its existing form it was doomed to failure. He believed in class influence and representation, in strong government, and in what, for want of a better phrase, may be called an aristocratic republic. Curiously enough, this theory was put in practice only in the South, where Hamilton had scarcely any followers.

The other great idea of which he was the embodiment was that of nationality. No other man of that period, except Washington, was

fully imbued with the national spirit. To Hamilton it was the very breath of his public life, the essence of his policy. To this grand principle many men, especially in later times, have rendered splendid services and made noble sacrifices; but there is no single man to whom it owes more than to Hamilton. In a time when American nationality meant nothing, he grasped the great conception in all its fullness, and gave all he had of will and intellect to make its realization possible. He and Washington alone perceived the destiny which was in store for the republic. For this he declared that the United States must aim at an ascendant in the affairs of America. For this he planned the conquest of Louisiana and the Floridas, and, despite the frowns of his friends, rose above all party feelings and sustained Jefferson in his unhesitating seizure of the opportunity to acquire that vast territory by purchase. To these ends everything he did was directed, and in his task of founding a government he also founded a nation. It was a great work. Others contributed much to it, but Hamilton alone fully understood it. On the other side was Jefferson, also a man who represented ideas, that of democracy and that of a confederacy, with a weak general government and powerful states threatening secession. The ideas which these two men embodied have in

their conflict made up the history of the United States. The democratic principles of Jefferson and the national principles of Hamilton have prevailed, and have sway to-day throughout the length and breadth of the land. But, if we go a step farther, we find that the great Federalist has the advantage. The democratic system of Jefferson is administered in the form and on the principles of Hamilton; and while the former went with the current and fell in with the dominant forces of the time, Hamilton established his now accepted principles, and carried his projects to completion in the face of a relentless opposition, and against the mistaken wishes of a large part of the people.

To attempt to measure the exact proportions of a great man is neither very easy nor perhaps very profitable. This biography has been written to little purpose if it has failed to show the influence of Hamilton upon our history, and this of itself is a title of the highest distinction. It is given to but few men to impress themselves indelibly upon the history of a great nation. But Hamilton, as a man, achieved even more than this. His versatility was extraordinary. He was a great orator and lawyer, and he was also the ablest political and constitutional writer of his day, a good soldier, and possessed of a wonderful capacity for organization and prac-

tical administration. He was a master in every field that he entered, and however he may have erred in moments of passion, he never failed. Weakness and incompetency were not to be found in Hamilton. Comparisons are valueless, because points of difference between men are endless. John Marshall ranked Hamilton next to Washington, and with the judgment of their great chief justice Americans are wont to be content. But wherever he is placed, so long as the people of the United States form one nation, the name of Alexander Hamilton will be held in high and lasting honor, and even in the wreck of governments that noble intellect would still command the homage of men.

APPENDIX

NOTE A.

Mr. Bancroft in the eighth volume of his history of the United States (page 79), in describing the great meeting at New York in July, 1774, says: "It has been kept in memory, that on this occasion a young man from abroad, so small and delicate in his organization that he appeared to be much younger than perhaps he really was, took part in the debate before the crowd. . . . He proved to be Alexander Hamilton, a West Indian. His mother, while he was yet a child, had left him an orphan and poor. A father's care he seems never to have known. The first written trace of his existence is in 1766, when his name appears as witness to a legal paper executed in the Danish island of Santa Cruz." I have followed in my first chapter the ordinarily accepted account of Hamilton's birth and parentage, and, after the most careful consideration and investigation which I have been able to give, I am clearly of the opinion that there is no evidence sufficient to justify any biographer in setting it aside. At the same time grave doubts have been cast upon this account, and as they

proceeded from so eminent an authority as Mr. Bancroft, I felt that it was impossible for me to pass them over in silence, especially when entirely new material relating to this subject had come to my knowledge. The question of Hamilton's parentage possesses the interest which always attaches to the origin of very distinguished men, and the date of his birth affects our estimate of his youthful powers. On any theory Hamilton displayed great talents at a very early age, but if the accepted date of his birth is correct, his precocity was certainly extraordinary. Mr. Bancroft is evidently of the opinion that Hamilton was older than he was said to have been when he spoke at the meeting in the fields, for he could hardly have "appeared" less than seventeen, which is the age given him by his biographer. Mr. Bancroft's doubts arose partly, perhaps, from the intrinsic improbability of such unusual intellectual maturity, but chiefly from the deed signed by Hamilton as a witness in 1766. If Hamilton was born in 1757, he was only nine years old when he signed this instrument. It is certainly not a little remarkable that a child of that tender age should have been accepted as a competent witness to an important document, but it is not in the least impossible, and any conclusion based on this phenomenon must of course be mere conjecture. If at thirteen he was able to manage the affairs of a considerable merchant, he might very well have been a fit witness at nine. The character of his signature is of more importance than the fact of his affixing it to a deed. I have carefully ex-

amined an exact tracing of this signature. The handwriting is obviously Hamilton's. The signature is written in a fair, open hand, and might well be the work of a man. Only a close examination, which reveals a certain roundness in the letters, and some deliberation on the part of the writer, suggests youthful penmanship. The signature is certainly a very mature one to have been written by a boy nine years old. But then it is not at all an impossible feat, and is by no means so extraordinary as the letter to Ned Stevens a few years later, or, indeed, as many of Hamilton's youthful performances.

This document, signed in 1766, is the only evidence directly bearing on Hamilton's age; but the fact that the date of his birth has been questioned, leads necessarily to an inquiry as to the circumstances of his origin and parentage, which have rendered such doubts possible. In a letter to a kinsman in Scotland, in 1797, he himself says: "You no doubt have understood that my father's affairs at a very early day went to wreck; so as to have rendered his situation during the greatest part of his life ineligible. This state of things occasioned a separation between him and me, when I was very young, and threw me upon the bounty of my mother's relatives, some of whom were then wealthy, though, by vicissitudes to which human affairs are so liable, they have been since much reduced and broken up. I myself, at about sixteen, came to this country." This meagre statement is all Hamilton himself tells us of his origin. He separated completely from his past when he joined

the army of the Revolution. We have no letters from relatives or friends in the West Indies except from Dr. Knox, the Nevis clergyman. There is also a letter, dated in 1785, from Hamilton to a brother James, who had written to him for money. In this letter Hamilton says that he has not heard from his brother and correspondent for years, and does not know whether he is married or single. He then asks anxiously about his father, saying that he not only is totally ignorant of that gentleman's circumstances, but that he does not know whether his father is alive or dead.[1] After Hamilton became famous his father appeared, or rather wrote to him, and he sent his father money and urged the old gentleman to come to this country.

This lack of information concerning the family and early life of such an eminent man is of itself enough to cause inquiry, and every one versed in American history is aware of the fact that a certain amount of mystery has hung over Hamilton's birth and parentage. Every student of the period is also familiar with the story, which oral tradition has handed down, that Hamilton was the illegitimate son of a rich West Indian planter or merchant, generally supposed to have been Mr. Stevens, the father of Hamilton's early friend and school-fellow.

This tradition has always been vague and unsupported. In the course of an examination of the Pickering papers for another object, I found among the memoranda collected by Colonel Pickering, with

[1] *History of the Republic*, by J. C. Hamilton, vol. vii. p. 842.

the purpose of writing memoirs of his contemporaries, two somewhat similar accounts of Hamilton's birth and parentage. It must be remembered that, although Colonel Pickering did not always agree with Hamilton, he was one of his most devoted admirers. He considered Hamilton by far the greatest man of his time and country, ranking him without hesitation above Washington. The memoranda in question are as follows: —

ALEXANDER HAMILTON. *Philadelphia, February* 15, 1822.

This morning I met with my friend Mr. James Yard of this city, with whom I have had an acquaintance of between twenty and thirty years. He and Dr. Stevens of the West Indies married, if I mistake not, two sisters, the daughters of the Danish Governor of Santa Cruz, of the name of Walterstorff (or a name sounding like it). Mr. Yard first introduced Dr. Stevens to me, when it was contemplated to appoint him American Consul General for St. Domingo, at the time that the distinguished negro General Toussaint L'Ouverture bore the chief sway in the Island. The conversation led us to speak of General Alexander Hamilton. I remarked to Mr. Yard, that at the first sight of Dr. Stevens his likeness to Hamilton was so strong, I concluded they were brothers, for it was generally understood that Hamilton was an illegitimate son of a gentleman of that name. Mr. Yard now told me that General Hamilton was born in the island of Nevis (near St. Christopher's), the natural son of a Scotch gentleman of the name of Hamilton; that he was an apprentice to Nicholas Cruger, who afterwards removed (or returned) to New York; that there Hamilton and Stevens

went to school together ; and since the death of Hamilton, an aunt, the sister of his mother, came to New York, and was for some weeks in Mrs. Hamilton's house, from whom (Mr. Yard naturally concluded) Mrs. Hamilton must have received full information of her husband's parentage ; that this aunt being poor, and removed to Burlington, in New Jersey, received the aids of benevolence, partly from Mr. Yard ; who also facilitated her return to the West Indies. Mr. Yard added, that General Hamilton's mother died but two or three years ago.

Mr. Yard told me, that after he knew that the papers, collected in relation to writing the life of Hamilton, had been put into the hands of Mr. Joseph Hopkinson, he advised Hopkinson frankly to state, that Hamilton was the natural son of a Scotch gentleman in the West Indies, as an avowal of a fact for which Hamilton, not being responsible, ought not to suffer in his reputation. [Mr. Yard (a gentleman of distinguished sagacity and information) might also think an open avowal of the fact more dignified in relation to a person of Hamilton's exalted talents and integrity, than any other course ; and that to glide over his birth, the birth of a man so eminent, without adverting to his father, would amount to a confession that he was (in I believe English law-language) "filius nullius," or in plain English, "Nobody knew who was his father," the meaning of both expressions being that he was some one's natural son].

As to the strong likeness between General Hamilton and Dr. Stevens, Mr. Yard could give no account ; altho' it seemed apparent that he thought them near of kin. In cases of this sort, the possibility of *kindred blood* gives rise to surmises, or strong suspicions, of which no proof is attainable. — *From the Pickering MSS. vol. li. p.* 250.

ALEXANDER HAMILTON. *June* 29, 1822.

Altho' little if anything was publicly spoken, yet it seemed always to have been understood, among those who were acquainted with this extraordinary man, that he was the illegitimate offspring of a Mr. Hamilton, in the West Indies. Meeting this morning with Mr. James Yard, — a merchant of Philadelphia whom I have long known, a gentleman distinguished for his good sense and information, and who had lived for some time in the West Indies, and was particularly conversant with the Danish Islands of St. Thomas and St. Croix, — I renewed the subject of General Hamilton's parentage, of which we had before conversed, and Mr. Yard repeated: That Hamilton was born in the Island of Nevis, the reputed son of a Scotch merchant of the name of Hamilton. That he was some time in the store of Mr. Cruger (I believe in St. Croix), and was sent to New York to obtain an education, it being observed that he possessed a mind of a superior cast. Mr. Yard supposed that Mr. Cruger (who was from New York) contributed towards the means required for that object. Edward Stevens (afterwards Dr. Stevens with whom I was acquainted in this city) was sent with Hamilton to New York, for the same purpose — his education.

About the year 1798, after the French had been massacred or expelled from Hispaniola, and the negroes under Toussaint were masters of the French part of the island, it was thought expedient by the American Government (Adams then the President) to send thither an agent, in the character of Consul General, and from my inquiries concerning Dr. Stevens, then in Philadelphia, he appeared in all respects singularly qualified for the office. He had long resided in the West Indies, understood the

French language, was very intelligent, and a worthy man. With his brother-in-law, James Yard (for I understood they had married sisters, the daughters of the Governor Walterstorff of one of the Danish Islands), I had a previous acquaintance; and to him I expressed my opinion of Dr. Stevens, from what I had heard of his character, from Mr. Yard, or some other source of information. The arrangements being thus far advanced, I said to Mr. Yard : " But I have not yet seen Dr. Stevens." Mr. Yard answered, "I will bring him to you." They came together to see me. At the first glance, I was struck with the extraordinary similitude of his and General Hamilton's faces ; I thought they must be *brothers.* To-day, Mr. Yard informed me that the remark had been made a thousand times ; that when young children, they lived together in the family of the father of Stevens, and were sent together to New York for their education. Conjecture here will suppose some secrets, which, if known, might account for the striking likeness of these two persons.

Mr. Hamilton, the reputed father of the General, became a planter in Granada. Whether he patronized, or in any way provided even for the education of Alexander, Mr. Yard did not know. An aunt of Alexander's came from the West Indies to New York, some years ago, and lived a good while in the family of Mrs. Hamilton, the General's widow. Thence the aunt (I think Mr. Yard called her name Mitchell) went to Burlington ; where, becoming blind, a collection was made among some of Hamilton's friends, to enable her to go back to the West Indies. There is now in this city a person (I think Mr. Yard called him a merchant and pronounced his name, but which I do not recollect), Mr. Yard said, the son of another sister of General Hamilton's mother. — *From the*

Pickering MSS. vol. li. p. 302, in possession of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

It does not, of course, in any way detract from Hamilton's fame or from his merits if any of these stories should be true. It is needless to say that such a fact would not reflect upon him, or upon those who bear his name and have the honor to be descended from him. His rise was remarkable, and was equally honorable to his talents and character when it is remembered that he came a stranger from an obscure island, one of the pettiest possessions of England, and that he made his way to the very highest rank in everything which he attempted, unsupported by wealth and unaided by family connections. If, in addition to all the difficulties which he overcame, that of illegitimacy be added, it is simply a new title to the respect of the world for his genius and force of character. One of the penalties of his greatness is the fact that thereby the question of his birth and parentage assumes considerable historical interest.

It can be said that Colonel Pickering's memoranda are mere gossip. Such they are on their face, and nothing would be more distasteful to me than to print them, if they could thus be put aside. They could be condemned in this way if we had a clear, authentic, and well-proved account of Hamilton's origin. As this is not the case, the memoranda of Colonel Pickering, taken in conjunction with the doubts expressed by Mr. Bancroft and the tradition familiar to students of our history, acquire an importance and interest which they would not otherwise possess, and

which render it impossible silently to pass them over in any attempt to write Hamilton's life. To explain clearly what has just been said, it is necessary to look closely at the accepted account, and show briefly why it is of such a nature as to make doubts possible and give importance to Colonel Pickering's statements.

We are not told by Mr. John C. Hamilton, either in the first and unfinished life of his father or in his second elaborate and complete life, entitled the "History of the Republic," the Christian name of Hamilton's maternal grandfather, Mr. Faucette, or of Hamilton's mother, or of his mother's first husband. We are not told when or where Mrs. Hamilton was married to her first husband, Lavine, from whom it is said she was divorced. Divorce was extremely rare in the colonies. In England and in the crown provinces it involved long, difficult, and expensive proceedings of the greatest publicity. We are not told when, where, how, or for what cause the divorce was obtained. In the first life it is said that "there were several sons, of whom Alexander was the youngest." In the "History of the Republic" it is stated that Hamilton was the only surviving child; and yet in the appendix to the same work a letter is given, to which I have already referred, written by Hamilton to a brother named James. If this contradiction is explained by a second marriage of Hamilton's father, it can only be said that there is no mention of such a marriage. In the first life it is said that Hamilton was confided to the care of his mother's relatives, Mr. Peter Lytton and his sister, afterwards Mrs.

Mitchell. In the "History of the Republic," Mr. Lytton and Mrs. Mitchell have disappeared, and Hamilton's guardians are spoken of simply as his mother's relatives. From the Pickering memoranda we learn that Mrs. Mitchell came to this country and lived with Hamilton's widow, and that she was a sister of Hamilton' mother. Mr. Peter Lytton was therefore the brother of Hamilton's mother, and her maiden name must have been Lytton and not Faucette, unless there was a second marriage in this instance also, and the relationship between her and Lytton, therefore, only that of the half-blood. Mr. John C. Hamilton says that Hamilton's mother died while Alexander was still a child. Mr. Yard, on the other hand, who had married into a West Indian family, who was a close connection of Edward Stevens, Hamilton's earliest friend and school-fellow, and who was therefore in a position to know, says that Hamilton's mother was living in 1818. The unquestioned resemblance between Stevens and Hamilton would be of no great importance, and might readily be dismissed as accidental, were it not for the additional fact that they were educated, and went to college together, and that, according to Mr. Yard, Hamilton was brought up in the Stevens family.

Enough has been said to show the cause of the doubts which have existed as to Hamilton's origin, and also the reason for the interest and importance which attach to the Pickering memoranda as the only evidence we have on the point from Hamilton's contemporaries, and which render their publication

historically desirable and even necessary. All the evidence has now been presented so far as I have been able to collect it, and the readers of this note can draw conclusions from it as well as I can. The various facts from the different sources cannot be reconciled with each other, or formed into a clear and coherent narrative as they stand, but this is probably owing to lack of fullness of statement.

The usually accepted version, which upon all the evidence in our possession I believe to be true, rests on the meagre statement of Hamilton himself which I have quoted, and on the careless and unsupported account given by Mr. John C. Hamilton. It may be fairly said that the authority of Hamilton and of his son is enough on such a matter, and, in the entire absence of convincing proof to the contrary, I have so treated it; and fully admitting the force of this argument, I have accepted their statement in this biography as final. As to the question of age, Hamilton himself could hardly have been much mistaken. He says he was sixteen when he came to this country, and I have no doubt that on any theory of his parentage this statement is correct, or very nearly so. He may fairly be accepted as one of the most remarkable examples of mental precocity of which we have any knowledge. There is also no doubt as to the identity of his father, James Hamilton. He was a younger son of the Laird of Grange, one of the Cambuskeith Hamiltons, and is duly recorded in Patterson's "History of Ayrshire and its Families" (p. 203, vol. i.). Hamilton himself knew about his father's family and

the two elder brothers successively Lairds of Grange, and his authority as to his parentage can be overthrown only by direct proof to the contrary.

In conclusion let me say, more definitely if possible than I have yet done, that I have discussed this matter fully, and have printed this note, and the somewhat contradictory Pickering memoranda, solely because I did not feel that it would have been honest for a biographer to suppress such new and important statements, however vague and inconclusive, in regard to the birth and parentage of a man who was so highly distinguished, and who left such deep marks of his personal influence upon the history and institutions of the United States.

NOTE B.

The quarrel between Hamilton and Washington, which led to the former's leaving the staff of the commander-in-chief, has always been given an importance which perhaps does not properly belong to it. It has at all events always been fully discussed by every one who has had occasion to consider it, and I therefore shall be pardoned for adding some facts in regard to it which came to my knowledge after this volume was in the press. It is well known that Hamilton was not fully satisfied with his position on Washington's staff, and that he desired to be appointed adjutant-general, that he was pressed for this post by Lafayette ("Memoirs and Correspondence of Lafayette," vol. i. p. 366) and by General

Greene (Hamilton's "History of the Republic," vol. i. p. 141), and that Lafayette subsequently wrote to him in a way which showed that his resignation from the staff had been contemplated for some time. ("Memoirs and Correspondence of Lafayette," vol. i. p. 302.)

I have been informed by a gentleman [1] who was a most eminent historical authority, and a friend of the late Jared Sparks, that Mr. Sparks told him of a conversation which he had with Lafayette on this subject when the latter visited this country in 1825. Lafayette told Mr. Sparks that Hamilton had pressed Washington for another position; that Washington had refused his request, as in the case of the adjutant-generalship; and that they had had two or three disagreements growing out of this wish of Hamilton's before the final breach at New Windsor. This statement shows that there were causes for the quarrel which did not appear on the surface, and that the separation was neither a new nor a sudden idea upon Hamilton's part at least. (See, also, Hamilton's letter to Schuyler, February 18, 1781, in the new edition of Hamilton's Works, where it is now for the first time given in full.)

NOTE C.

Hamilton's argument in the Croswell case was reported and printed in a pamphlet which is occasionally to be met with, and has been reprinted in Moore's "American Eloquence."

[1] The late Rev. George E. Ellis.

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